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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

# ImagineFX
## ANNUAL

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PABLO CARPIO

ART & ADVICE    WORKSHOPS    GALLERIES    AND MORE!

# Welcome to

## NO. 1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

## ANNUAL

A compilation of the very best content from **ImagineFX** magazine over the past year, this bookazine is packed with fantastic tutorials to help you master traditional and digital art. Divided into clear sections covering artist portfolios, workshops, sketchbooks and traditional art, we'll show you how professional artists collaborate on projects and reveal what's in their sketchbooks, how to paint bright and dynamic figures, create striking paintings and illustrations, and much more. Our extensive Q&A includes expert advice and tips on how to get the most out of your projects. On top of all this, we've included some brilliant free resources for you to use in your projects, including brushes and start files that enable you to follow the tutorials in the bookazine. Visit FileSilo and download them to get started.

# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
# ImagineFX
## ANNUAL

Part of the
# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
# ImagineFX
bookazine series

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# Workshops

# Traditional

# FXPosé

## THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## Winson Tsui

**LOCATION:** Canada **MEDIA:** openCanvas, Photoshop **WEB:** www.quirkilicious.art

Freelance illustrator Winson's interests range from video games and cartoons to anime. His art tends to feature lots of movement and a strong narrative.



### 1 THE LAST AIRBENDER
"As a creator, Avatar was inspiring for me because it was the first animated series to successfully appropriate a Japanese animation style into a western cartoon."
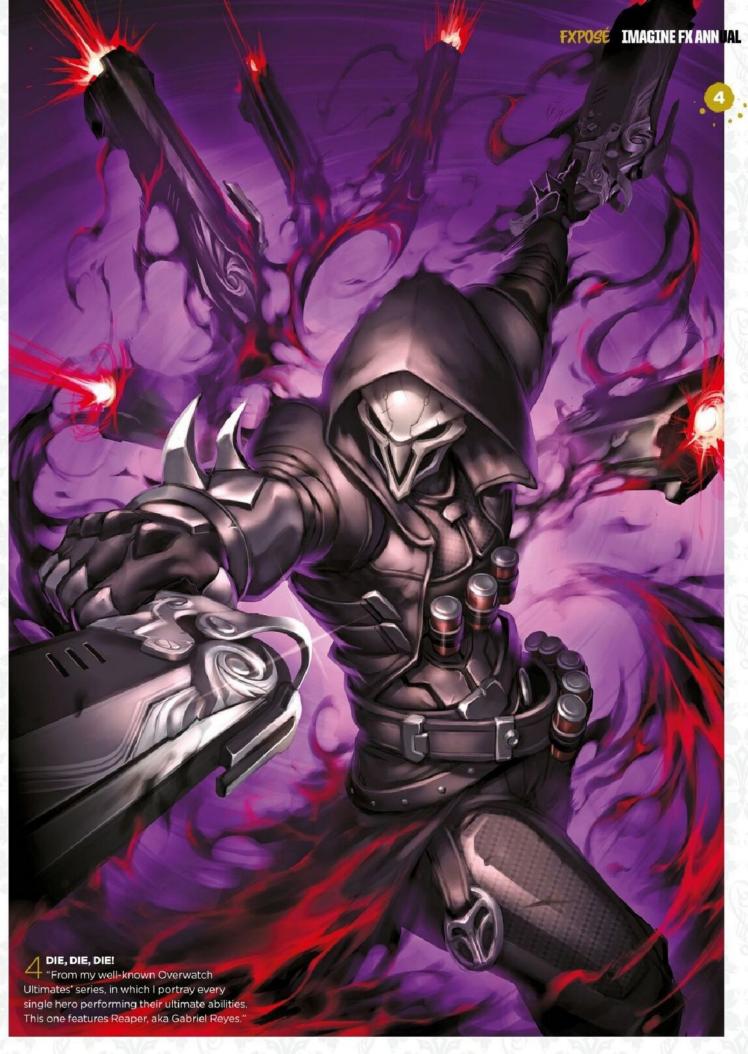
### 2 DEITY
"Here's an original character that I redesign every couple of years. Deity is a half angel/demon being that I came up with during high school. The idea isn't too interesting, but I feel each iteration illustrates my growth as an artist."

### 3 ALLIANCE AND HORDE
"World of Warcraft was a huge part of my life in my teens, and I wanted to pay homage to that. I also pulled some characters from Heroes of the Storm."

4

4 **DIE, DIE, DIE!**
"From my well-known 'Overwatch
Ultimates' series, in which I portray every
single hero performing their ultimate abilities.
This one features Reaper, aka Gabriel Reyes."

# Ali Hassanein

**LOCATION:** Canada **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.alihassanein.com

"I adore the functionality of digital painting, but also love the gritty texture of an old oil painting," says illustrator Ali. "I try to approach digital painting like traditional painting, to maintain that organic aesthetic."

## 1 IMPERFECT

"I was looking to paint an android, but I wanted it to be almost entirely human in appearance with just a hint of synthetic, rather than a clear 50/50 hybrid."

## 2 QUEEN

"Inspired by Ruben Ireland's Girl with Finches, I decided to paint some bees worshiping a human as their queen. The hair was both a nightmare and a delight to paint."

## 3 HOLLOW

"I was trying to capture the feeling of being trapped in your own shell. Breaking through your own barriers can be difficult, but well worth it in the end."

## 4 DIGITAL BLOCK

"In the eyes of the public, there's an inherent stigma attached to digital art. I hope there comes a day where the word 'digital' no longer holds us back."

1

# Jamie Noguchi

LOCATION: US  MEDIA: Photoshop  WEB: www.artstation.com/jamienoguchi

Jamie is a self-published cartoonist and the co-founder of Super Art Fight. "The first things I learned how to draw were giant transforming robots, and they've stuck with me ever since," he says.

### 1 BIG BAD WOLF
"I'm working on redesigning the classic Little Red Riding Hood fairytale as a tokusatsu show. This is my fully armoured interpretation of the wolf in typical kaijin style."

### 2 MAGS
"Fan art of the main character from Monica Gallagher's Assassin Roommate webcomic. I wanted to give her some lightweight armour instead of her regular dark hoodie."

### 3 METAL BEETLE
"The month of September is Tokutember, an event I created where you design your own tokusatsu hero. This is my version of a Metal Hero."

### 4 RED RIDER
"My Kamen Rider interpretation of the Red character. The cape was fun to design, although I don't know how practical it is!"
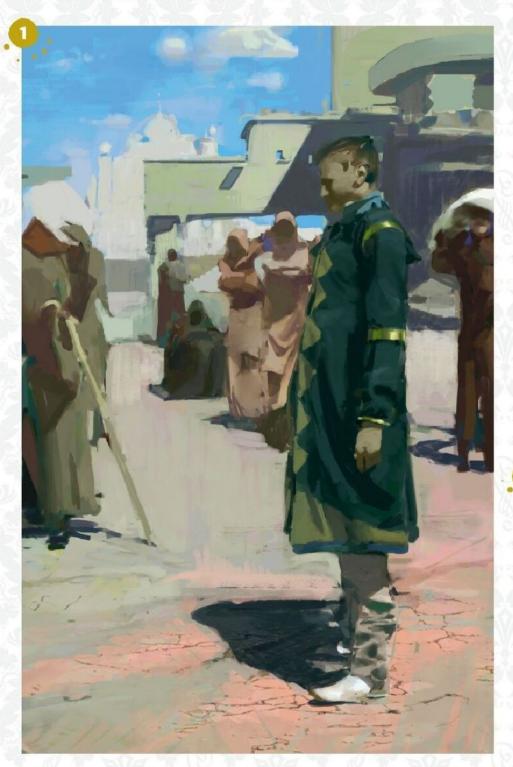
# Devin Korwin

**LOCATION:** US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.devinkorwin.com

"My favourite part of painting is creating worlds that I can lose myself in," says concept artist Devin. "My goal is to achieve a sense of mystery and wonder."

### 1 THE SEARCH
"I was inspired by orientalist painters for this. It started off as a horizontal composition but I extended the canvas down as I went on."

### 2 DRAGON
"This was inspired by Gustave Doré's illustrations for the Divine Comedy. I love the sense of darkness he was able to achieve."

### 3 CONVENIENCE STORE
"This scene depicts a store robbery from the point of view of the cashier. I wanted to evoke a sense of action while still flattening out the composition into an abstract design."

### 4 BEARDED MAN
"For this one I tried out a new workflow for painting portraits. I had a lot of fun designing the various shapes in the beard."

# Nadzeya Makeyeva

**LOCATION:** Belarus  **MEDIA:** Photoshop, pencils  **WEB:** nadzeya-makeyeva.com/gallery

Nadzeya is a multidisciplinary artist who has drawn every day since she was a child. "I'm an illustration maniac," she says, "and my goal is to create bizarre, unique artworks."

### 1 VELOCIRAPTOR

"This velociraptor was used as a lucky mascot for the Mad Rabbit travel T-shirt campaign. I also used the illustration as a silkscreen print on a separate range of T-shirts."

### 2 ARTICHOKE ELF

"This is the first illustration in my upcoming series of fairy botanical creatures. It's based on the idea that all plants have their own spirit and character."

**3 GOOD SIDE**
"The artwork for the Goodbye June single Good Side. The band requested a mix of hand-drawn and realistic digital painting, but also wanted it to be unique and a bit psychedelic."

**4 MAD RABBIT 1, 2, 3**
"I had some free time between commercial jobs and decided to create some personal illustrations of absolutely insane rabbits characters. After I published them on Behance they went viral, and a number of people got in touch asking to use them for clothing prints and patterns."

# Niyas Syed

LOCATION: India MEDIA: Photoshop, 3D-Coat, Vue WEB: www.niyasck.com

Niyas started as a lighting artist, and moved from one discipline to another until he found concept art and was hooked. He now works as a freelance artist.

### 1 PLANET STORENUS
"A planet with a red atmosphere (not Mars) somewhere in the galaxy, where humans have built dome-shaped stations. I wanted to create an atmospheric landscape with these strange, spiky rocks."

### 2 VERTICAL VILLAGE
"As the numbers of inhabitants has increased, they have built vertical blocks that satisfy the basic requirements of density and affordability. I took my inspiration from Rio's high-density slums."

### 3 CYBERPUNK TRAIN YARD
"My goal in this image was to depict a fictional cyberpunk train yard city, drawing inspiration from several photographs of Tokyo and Dubai at night. I fall in love with anything that has an epic feel."

## Artist insight

# 15 WAYS TO BE A BETTER ARTIST

Ever wanted to know the tricks of the concept art trade? Artist **Eddie Del Rio** shares his tried and tested creative workflow techniques

### Artist PROFILE

**Eddie Del Rio**
LOCATION: US

Eddie's worked as a concept designer for the past 20 years in film and games. His clients have included LucasArts, Warner Bros., Fox Entertainment Group, Lucasfilm, Disney, THQ, Activision and 2K Games. These days, Eddie works primarily from home with his family in California.
www.eddiedelrio.com

Time and time again I get asked what's my process. Truth be told, I don't have just one process. Instead, I use a tool box that's full of techniques. It helps to save time and create a smooth flow of ideas.

Generally, no two assignments are the same. They're not cookie-cutter tasks. They require different moods, design, creativity, touch and feeling. After a while you figure that out and you pick the best tools for the job.
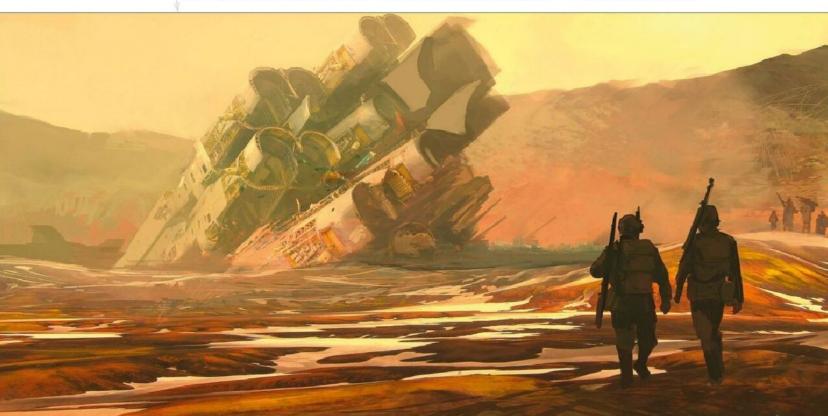
So, for this article, the ImagineFX team asked me to share several tools from my creative box. I'll show you how I use them individually and in tandem with others. Sometimes one technique works well for something, while other times you'll need the whole arsenal of tools and tricks to make the image sing and hit the deadlines. Okay, let's begin!

## PART ONE: QUICK SKETCHES

### 1 PAINTING FAST SKETCHES FOR FUN

I spend about an hour on each one of these guys. Fun, simple sketches like these can be cranked out and help to fill out a portfolio. Try and take some time out of a day or evening, and do a quick colour sketch now and then. You may not always be happy with the final piece, but there's a good chance that you'll have learned something new during the image creation process – and you may even produce a decent portfolio piece out of it to boot.

## 2 SELF-PROMOTION TOOL

As well as having experimental, high-energy pieces interspersed throughout your portfolio, you can use them as a handy calling card for a spot of self-promotion. After you've produced a piece that you're happy with, add it to your online portfolio. Then roll up your sleeves and get busy on social media. Hit all the outlets: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and more. Remind people that you're still making art. Artists can't always show off their client work because of NDAs. Personal pieces go a long way towards maintaining your online presence.
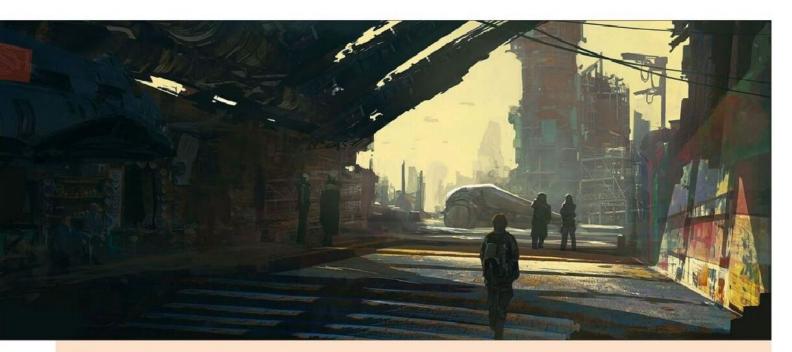


## 3 FLESH OUT A VARIETY OF STYLES AND CONTENT

Here's another reason to produce some quick sketches. Perhaps you've heard from a friend that a project's coming up and you'd like to show you're capable of working in that genre or style. Do a sketch to show that you'd be a good fit. It doesn't need to be on the nose as far as content is concerned – just something that looks like it would fit in that particular world. There's a chance the art director will see it and think that you're a good match. If not, no matter – you still have another quality promotional piece to use as you see fit. ➤➤

> 66 Personal pieces go a long way towards maintaining your online presence 99

## 4 LEARN TO BECOME A GOOD STORYTELLER

One good thing that these quick sketches force you to do is think about storytelling. For this piece, I didn't know what I was going to paint before I started. And I'm sure I spent the first 10 minutes going back and forth on what the subject matter was going to be. But eventually I started to illustrate a corridor and some shapes in the background.

Because I was working so fast and loose I began to think about smaller facets of the story. For example, how I do I express these ideas in a very simple visual language? Here, the two characters outside are clearly together, while the character in the foreground is alone. The foreground character represents the viewer and the background figures are the mystery and the action. As the viewer, you're forced to walk into that microcosm of mystery. It's the drama and mystery that really sells this piece. All of this was conceived while I was working. It's pretty fun and adds a whole other layer to a piece that would otherwise have been pretty generic.

## 5 WALKTHROUGH OF MY PROCESS

Previously, I've described how I approach my sketch work. Here, I've broken down my sketching process into two steps. I kick things off with a basic block-in. I might have a prepared textural background that I pre-paint or I'll just paint it during this step. Then I add the larger shapes and start to work out the composition and the story in the scene. The textures that I paint give the illusion of more detail present in the image then there really is. Some stuff like the figures are just scribbled blobs at this point.

Now that I have my story planned out, I begin to fully realise it.... or realise it just enough so that it's clear to the viewer. I add some lighting breaking through the tree foliage. Well, foliage that you really don't see. You only have the light hitting the ship and the small little clump of tree foliage in the foreground to inform the viewer of the space that's outside the picture frame.

Little design tricks such as this add scope to something that, on the surface, is pretty simple. The viewer's mind then works to fill in those gaps with the little hints and bread crumbs that I leave for them. I let the viewer's own imagination do some of the heavy lifting. As a result, they also feels more committed to the image and the story that it's trying to tell.
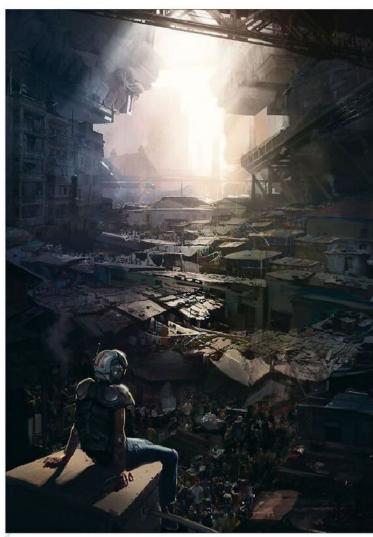
# PART 2: PHOTOBASH

## 1 START WITH A STRONG SILHOUETTE

This image of a mech seen at an imposing angle may look like it was modelled and rendered in a 3D program, but it was actually photobashed together. I began by getting hold of a large collection of photographs of mechanical objects – some that I had taken myself. Then I fired up Photoshop and sketched out the silhouette of the mech. Only when I was happy with the general shape and design direction did I reach for the stack of photos. After that, I transformed and colour-matched elements from my photos to fit what I wanted. This image took between three and four hours to create.

66 **Photobashing enables me to expand on my core art skills – it's not a shortcut to becoming a good artist** 99

## 2 USING PHOTOBASHING TO MAKE SOMETHING MORE ILLUSTRATIVE

Although it may not look it, there's a ton of photobash work here – about 80 per cent, I'd say. But it's heavily painted on. I start by laying in images almost immediately... almost designing with them. While I'm laying in images and bashing them together, I'm also selecting light and dark areas, and painting into them. I'm after the detail and texture: I leave out what I don't need and push the shapes that support the composition. For some parts I want lots of detail; elsewhere, I'll blow out the light values. This image contains dozens of elements from photos. You can see them on close inspection, but at first glance most people think it's a fully painted piece. I often use photobashing to a lesser degree in my art, towards the end of the painting process. It's an effective way of introducing a layer of texture to a scene.

This method works for me because I know the basics of painting. Photobashing enables me to expand on my core art skills – it's not a shortcut to becoming a good artist. It takes a lot of practice to use photos this way. ▸▸

# PART 3: USE 3D TOOLS FOR CONCEPTS

## 1 USING 3D TO DEPICT HARD SURFACES

For spaceships, vehicles, mech designs or in fact anything mechanical, I tend to use 3D tools. They enable me to design from multiple angles, and ensure that the finished work has a clean look. The art will be more precise, with sharper edges compared to the painterly results from using standard 2D tools. In addition, I can design the object from multiple angles, knowing that nothing will end up being fudged. It's going to be accurate. I like to see that in mechanical designs.

## 2 REPETITIVE ARCHITECTURE

Similar-looking buildings or architecture from dramatic angles is another reason for using 3D tools. Even if I'm going to end up painting on the art, it'll save me time if I model instead of drafting and plotting everything in 2D. Examples include rows of columns in interiors or building blocks in a street scene. 3D tools will boost your workflow in these assignments.





## 3 CREATING ASSETS THAT WILL BE USED ACROSS MULTIPLE IMAGES

Another reason for using 3D is if an asset is going to be used in a range of images. I spent a week or so designing this racing mech in 3D. I began with some rough 2D sketches, modelled the design, asked for feedback from friends and did multiple revisions. I was happy to spend this time up front because I knew I was going to use this asset across multiple images, and that having a fully formed design at the start would save me time later on. For example, take the reflections on the mech and the decals on the design. Achieving that look with just 2D would be a challenge.
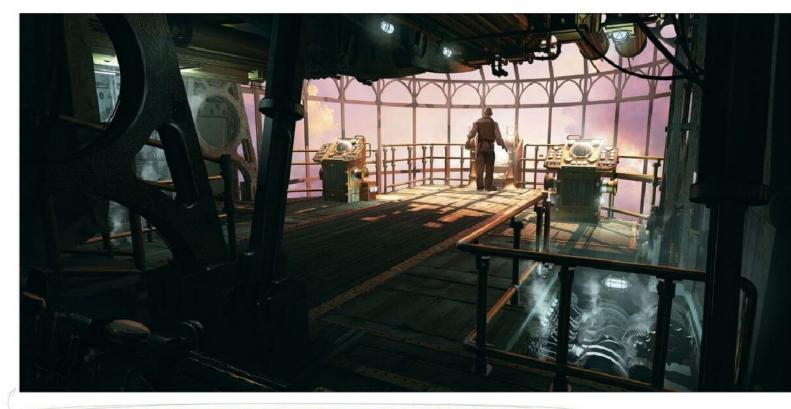
> 66 I was happy to spend this time up front because I knew I was going to use this asset across multiple images 99

## 4 USE 3D ASSETS TO CREATE KEY FRAMES

Thanks to the pre-designed mech asset, it took me just under a day to put this scene together. This is one of six key frames that I developed featuring the mech. In the end, it speeds up the creative process – important when it's your IP and you have to do everything in your own time!



## 5 CREATING COMPLEX INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE OR MECHANICAL DESIGNS

This design was going to be pretty complicated with all the pipes and gears in a 3D space. To help save me time I modelled the scene in 3D and even lit and rendered it. All those pipes and railing would have been a pain to replicate in 2D, as well as taking time. But using 3D tools helped me to complete the scene quickly. The room is largely symmetrical so I could just mirror the geometry, and the rest is a lot of duplicated pipes. ➤➤

# PART 4: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

## 1 FRAMING THE ACTION

Here, I wanted to do some fan art from a sci-fi children's show. I knew I didn't want to spend more than a day on it. The piece I had in mind was pretty epic, so I had to think how I could effectively develop the frame.

First, I did a quick sketch that conveyed the energy, the basic story premise, all the big elements and the overall composition. Then I got some photos and began taking out bits and pieces, comping them in while painting and editing the piece. After that I looked at

the big mech and Kaiju battling in the background, which was still pretty sketchy. Because it was the focal point I felt I could get a lot of bang for my buck if I modelled the mech. I didn't spend too much time modelling: it was all blocks and cylinders.

Then I photographed the actual toy of the mech and overlayed that photo on to the front of my model. It wasn't perfect, but it worked fine for me. I posed it quickly and then rendered it. I must have spent no more than and hour or so on the mech. I decided

that the kaiju could be painted up a little more than the sketch I did at the beginning.

I was about to call it quits, but then felt the chaos of the foreground elements was fighting with the flow of the image and distracting from the focal point. So I decided to add the bird fighter flying into the image, which I quickly modelled in my 3D package. I added it to the frame and painted the blue energy thrust. The fighter helped with the flow, directed the viewer into the focal point and framed the action – all at the same time!



## 2 FROM SKETCH TO FINISHED ART

How to consider focal points, storytelling and detailing in this epic sci-fi scene



### A Getting the basics down

I lay down a fast and quick background, mostly to establish the palette and the general directions I want to go. This step prompts me to ask questions, such as what do I want to accomplish with this piece, and identifying the story I want to tell. Now I begin to answer the question of story. I choose my focal point and begin to build the scene.

### 3 GOING LIGHT ON PHOTOS

This piece was done primarily in 3D in the early stages. I then painted some values and some other large-scale details. But for the finer details and texture, I used photos. You can't really see them, but they're there. This was done more to add texture, creating the illusion that there's more detail than there is.

> 66 For the finer details and texture, I used photos. You can't see them, but they're there 99

### B Think about little story moments

I start to think about how people will interact in this world and begin to add smaller details to help define objects in the scene. This is definitely the fun part! You can bring in all kinds of little story moments to help enrich the composition.

### C Ensuring clarity throughout the scene

Now I just finish up the piece and begin to add more details and make sure that the image has a clean read. The viewer's experience is key!

# Artist Q&A

## STRUGGLING WITH A PAINTING TECHNIQUE OR TOPIC? EMAIL **HELP@IMAGINEFX.COM** TODAY!

### The ImagineFX panel
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

**Houston Sharp**
US-based Houston is a concept artist and illustrator who's worked on films such as Wonder Woman, Rampage and X-Men: Dark Phoenix.
http://ifxm.ag/h-sharp

**Robert Kim**
Robert's a freelance artist and instructor at Talent Tree, a Toronto-based digital painting and concept art school in Ontario, Canada.
www.roburii.com

**Belinda Leung**
Previously a lead artist in games, Belinda is now a freelance illustrator/concept artist in England who specialises in designing for films and games.
www.belindaleung.com

### Artist Q&A
**Need our advice?**
Email **help@imaginefx.com** with your art questions and we'll provide all the answers!

## Question
### How can I utilise 3D tools for a 2D illustration?
*Tesha Calhoun, Canada*

## Answer
### Houston replies

There are multiple ways to use 3D to produce artwork. Some artists create a highly detailed model and render it with beautiful lighting setups to achieve an image with little to no painting. But since I'm a painter, I prefer using 3D to help me solve tricky issues in a 2D piece, usually regarding extreme camera angles, challenging perspective, or when there are a lot of objects in a scene.

In other words, I use 3D to create my own references for paintings, the way an oil painter might hire models or build a maquette. An added benefit of creating artwork in this way is that the drawing/planning stage is essentially complete once you figure it out in 3D; simply paint on top of a render of screenshot of your base model instead of a pencil drawing.

Using 3D also enables you to very quickly test out multiple camera angles and compositions. Once you have your scene blocked out, it takes only a second to shift the camera to a new position.

### ● Artist's secret
### Take advantage of the software's capabilities
*Your use of 3D doesn't have to stop at establishing a composition or solving a tricky perspective issue. Set up some lights in your scene for instant lighting reference, or assign different materials to different parts of your model!*

With the drawing established by 3D, it's easy to quickly sketch out different lighting scenarios. Explore until you find one that fits your composition the best.



By building a simple 3D scene, many complications normally faced through drawing or painting are bypassed.

## Step-by-step: Using a 3D composition as a base for your painting stage



**1** Before jumping into your 3D software, identify what you're working towards. Sketch out your idea, trying to get the best composition. Establishing what you want at this stage will inform what exactly you'll need 3D for, and what can be left to painting.



**2** From my sketch I know I want a low, wide-angle camera, with a lot of perspective convergence and complicated objects. To save time, I jump to 3D, downloading a free dirt bike model, duplicating it, and using cubes for the background building.



**3** Now that all the components are in the scene, I adjust the camera to match my sketch. From there I render out a PSD, and use it as my underdrawing. All the difficult things like perspective and lens distortion are quickly taken care of.

## Question
# What's a good technique for painting realistic-looking wings?

*Jiang Li Lai, Scotland*

## Answer
### Robert replies

Painting wings or anything that has repeating patterns can be made easier if you approach it in a systematic way. The key is to block out the broad shapes first, then use a smaller brush to draw more specific details on top. Once you become comfortable with this technique you can use the same approach to tackle things like scales on a reptile or details on tree trunks.

The first thing to do whenever you're trying to achieve more realism is to study references from real life and try to extract out the underlying pattern that make up the subject that you're analysing. A bird's wing can be broken down into more general shapes that the feathers are arranged on top of. Remembering this will ensure you don't become lost in all the intricate details that you see in real-life references.

In addition, consider the overall shift in value that exists on the wing, which should take priority over the smaller details on individual feathers.

By understanding the underlying pattern of a structure you can tackle complex subjects like feathers on a wing with confidence and efficiency.

Applying Color Dodge can make an image pop by adding a luminous quality to the subject that you're painting. Try it out!
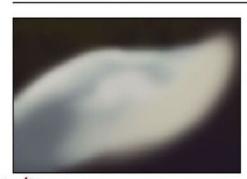
### ● Artist's secret
## Having fun with blending modes

One of my favourite ways to add highlights is using Photoshop's Color Dodge blending mode. This option can be turned on either through one of the layer tabs or in the brush property tab. Combine this with the default airbrush to add highlights that make your wing really pop.

## Step-by-step: Capture the shape of a bird's wing

**1** Block out the general shape and colour of the wing using the airbrush. Within the shape, apply the overall shift in value and colour. Don't worry about the small details at this stage: only try to capture the bigger, broader shapes first. I suggest working while zoomed out.

**2** Start laying down the patterns. Once you've established the general value and colour you can take a more specific brush to draw out the feather pattern. Use the Color Picker to follow the guideline you established in the previous stage, to maintain the overall shift in value.

**3** Apply cast shadow and highlights Identify the spots where the feathers would create cast shadow and drop in some darker tones. Erase the soft edges from previous step to solidify the silhouette. Finally, draw in highlights with lighter tones to accentuate the forms.

A basic three-point lighting system can be quick to implement and has the benefit of bringing out the contours of a face, even when viewed directly from the front.

## Question

## Can you suggest a quick technique for lighting a fantasy character?

*Hayden Bowen, Australia*

## Answer
### Belinda replies

When in need of a quick lighting solution for presenting a character, I like to use a three-point set up that effectively brings out the forms and the silhouette.
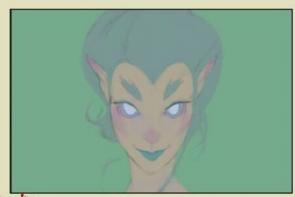
This starts off with the main key light, which sets the overall tone of the image. Next is the fill light, which lightens up the area in shadow enough to bring up the details. And finally there's the back light, which lights up the edge of the character to reveal the silhouette.
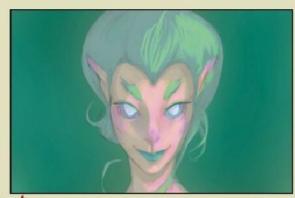
As this is a method I often turn to when I need to present a character quickly, I'll keep each of these "lights" on separate adjustment layers so I can tweak anything if necessary, such as the angle and colour of each light, to the design of the character and background. The idea is to stay as flexible as possible so you can accommodate any client changes by making non-destructive changes.

## Step-by-step: Put together a simple lighting scheme in Photoshop

**1** Starting my illustration with a loose line sketch, followed by the local colours enables me to focus on the design as opposed to painting form and values. To add to the lighting challenge, I decide to give this nymph opalescent white eyes!

**2** Next I add the key light, cast from the right to show the contours of the face. I use a mixture of adjustment layers set to Saturation and Overlay so that I can add some colour effects while maintaining the local colours that I painted previously.

**3** I then add the fill light from the left to bring out the form of the shadowed side, while a blue rim light coming in from the bottom left simulates the back-light. I adjust the background colour and value to complement the colours of the character.

Jewellery should feel like it sits on the character, so special attention needs to be paid to how it casts shadows and affects the surfaces around it.

## Step-by-step:
## Draw and light a delicate piece of gold jewellery



**1** I begin by blocking out the main shapes of the piece of jewellery, starting with a line drawing that then gets filled with the main local colours. I use a dark greenish background, which relates to the green of the jewel I plan to set into the jewellery.



**2** I want some of the finer chains to glisten, so this requires some sharp contrasts between light and dark along the surface of the material. I use adjustment layers to test out various lighting schemes set them to Color Dodge or Multiply.



**3** Once I'm happy with the lighting on the sheets of material, I duplicate the layer a few times and start trying out a few filigree design combinations. I use a layer mask to allow for any mistakes and once I'm happy, I add more cast shadows to the skin.

## Question
## Got any tips for painting jewellery?
*Leon Möller, Germany*

## Answer
**Belinda replies**

Jewellery and accessories can imbue a sense of culture, status and taste in a character, giving them added personality and depth. However, it can require an extra layer of research into materials and added care to make the objects believable while sitting on the character correctly.

In this painting, I decide to go with a decorative gold filigree necklace that's simple and delicate to suggest femininity and a certain amount of wealth and glamour. To keep things interesting, I design most of the details on the fly and went with what felt right, instead of prescribing too much from the beginning.

Working on separate layers and using adjustment layers enables you to experiment as you go. I also find it useful to start off with big overall shapes that are lit correctly, before carving in finer details. This means I can duplicate the layers and create various iterations of the detail within the shapes, and ensure I don't have to spend too much time rendering lighting on each version.

## Question
# I'm having trouble pushing scale in a composition – can you help?
*Eula Blackman, US*

## Answer
### Houston replies

Toying with scale boils down to two components: actual size difference between two or more things; and perceived scale, which we can evoke in a viewer through our compositional choices. With the first component, we can make something feel big by making its internal shapes or the things around it small. If we only have really large and really small (no medium-sized shapes or details), that difference in size will be more evident to us, pushing the scale.

For example, if you draw a large rectangular building, it may look fairly big already. But if all of its windows are drawn extremely small, the building will feel much more massive, like a skyscraper.

*Juxtaposing large, overall shapes with minuscule details makes this undead orangutan feel large compared to his immediate setting, and the world he inhabits larger still.*

As for the perceived scale, we can position the audience to "feel" a certain way about the scale of an object. In a film, when we see the big, intimidating bad guy, a common technique is to place the camera low so that we have to look up at him, even if the character is a normal-sized human. He seems bigger because of how he's presented.



### ● Artist's secret
### Reinforce your ideas
*Repetition is key to reinforcing a design. I don't just apply these scale-pushing techniques to my main point of interest; I repeat them all over, including on the unimportant towering buildings in the background. This boosts the massive scale of the world within this painting.*

## Step-by-step: Boost scale via size relationships and composition



**1** I start thinking about how to make the undead orangutan feel massive right from the start. So I choose a low camera angle, and establish the size of the temple in relation to him. I also place him higher in the frame than the human. This falls under the "perceived scale" approach.



**2** For emphasising size differences, I keep the details of things small in relation to their large overall shapes. Notice how tiny the orangutan's eye's and mouth are in relation to the big silhouette of his body. This principle is also applied to the temple's openings and broken stones.



**3** Although not completely necessary, having some recognisable objects can be a useful reference point to see how big or small something else is. Adding trees with tiny leaves and thin branches helps to make the other elements feel large, heavy and imposing.

# Artist Q&A

OUR FRIENDS AT SUN & MOON STUDIOS ANSWER
YOUR ANIMATION QUESTIONS!

## Question

### What's the best way to get an audience to quickly understand your character design's personality?

*Lewis Vincent, England*

## Answer
### Sam replies

Many things have to be considered when creating an instantly relatable character. Aspects such as shape, pose and exaggeration have all played key roles in creating beloved characters throughout the years.

Every character is built out of a number of shapes, and the type of shapes you choose will help define who your character is. Circles are often attributed to things like innocence, vulnerability and cuteness, while squares are a great way to build up a strong, stubborn character. Pose helps emphasise your choice. If you want the character to seem confident and open, have them leaning back with their chest puffed out.

Finally, exaggerating some of your characters defining features will help hammer their personality home and make them seem larger than life. It helps your audience to identify the character's main qualities and traits. Choosing one or two traits to emphasise over others is a great way to create variation and more memorable characters.
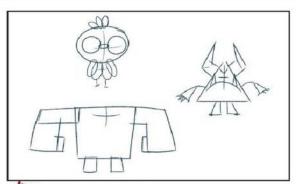
If you apply these factors, you'll have a character design people will feel like they've known for years.

Colours can also affect the audience's perception of a character. Bear in mind that the vibrance and saturation of your colour palette will have a huge effect on the overall mood of your work.

Even if only slightly, try to avoid making your characters completely symmetrical. A little bit of hair variation or a crooked tooth can add heaps of interest to a design and make it stand out from the rest.

# Step-by-step: Use basic shapes to inform viewers of a character's disposition

**1** Using one shape to define your character is a great way to get started. Adding more of the same shape helps sell your character's personality: circles for cute characters, squares for strong and triangles for the scary aggressive types. It's good at to nail down some strong poses for each figure, too.

**2** Now to flesh them out. Audiences will look to the facial features of your designs for a more conscious effort to get to know your characters, so giving them the right expression is pretty important. Adding some curved lines in with the straights on the body also creates some nice variation.

**3** It's time to push your characters' features to the limit! By enlarging some of your designs' main shapes and pushing expressions to their extremes, we instantly know what each character is thinking. The shapes and pose complement the expression and we now have some memorable relatable characters.

## Question
# What are the best mouth shapes to use when doing lip-sync?
*Kerry Eason, US*

## Answer
### Dylan replies
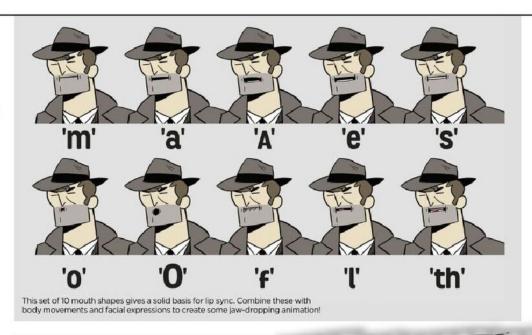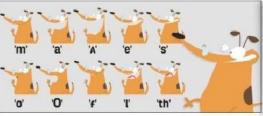
You may not be aware of this, but when we speak we don't form all the individual shapes in a word with our mouth. It's far too much effort! Instead, our mouths take the shortest route possible. The main mouth shapes are: a closed mouth M (which is also used for P and B); a wide mouth showing teeth for S (also used for C, D and T); an open O mouth; a wide and open A; and an E mouth, which is like A but wider still.

From there you have less-common secondary shapes: F, which has the lower lip tucked behind the upper teeth; and L is a wide mouth showing the tongue coming up behind the upper teeth. You'll also need an extreme version of O and A for when these are said more strongly, and finally a TH shape showing the tongue between the teeth.

To animate these words, it's best to find the main beats, adding in the most prominent key sounds and then playing the animation back to see how it flows and where to refine it with secondary shapes.



'm'    'a'    'A'    'e'    's'

'o'    'O'    'f'    'l'    'th'

This set of 10 mouth shapes gives a solid basis for lip sync. Combine these with body movements and facial expressions to create some jaw-dropping animation!



'm'  'a'  'A'  'e'  's'

'o'  'O'  'f'  'l'  'th'
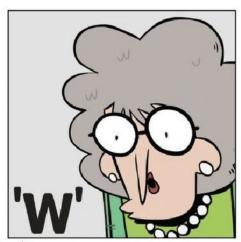
Lip sync can be a great opportunity for humour. Meet Maths Mutt, who has a pretty extreme contrast in his various mouth shapes, bringing this dog's absurd nature front and centre in his characterisation.
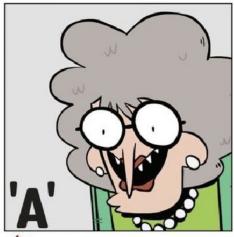
### ●Artist's secret
### Strike the right pose
*Animate the body movements first. A lot of the expression of dialogue is done with body language, and so if the way the body moves sells the lines well then lip sync will simply be the icing on the cake.*
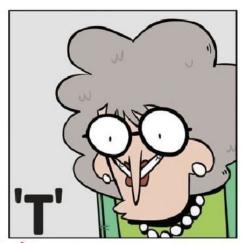
# Step-by-step: Animate a mouth to say "What?"



'W'

'A'

'T'

**1** Here's an example to animate the delightful Mrs Green saying "What?" after receiving some startling news from another character who's out of shot. Start with the O mouth shape.

**2** Add the A shape. She's speaking quite loudly so her mouth is wide open. The mouth size needs to match the intensity of the line being said, and the eyes and body movements should also mirror her mood.
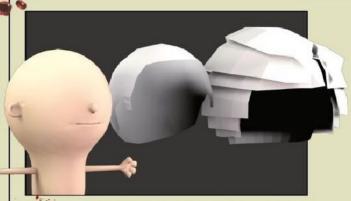
**3** Finally the T shape. These three shapes timed out to the voice track should look pretty good. Now I add smooth in-between animation to them, to make Mrs Green sell this line even better.

VIDEO
WORKSHOP
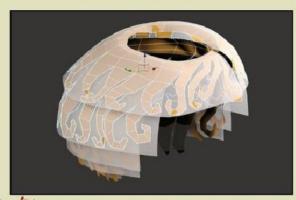
Hair made with modelled
geometry is ideal for a stylised
cartoony look. Perfect for this
Tyrion Lannister homage.

## Question

### How do I build up cartoonish-looking hair for my 3D character?

*Marcel Baum, Germany*

## Answer
### Owen replies

While realistic, dynamic hair can look great on a 3D character, when trying to achieve a stylised cartoony look, hair modelled with geometry is still my preferred choice. Geometry hair can take a while to build, but it's much quicker to render, requires no expensive plug-ins and with the use of a few simple modifiers you can achieve some good-looking dynamics.

By building layers of Guide geometry you can quickly block out the overall shape of your hair before

adding in any detail. You can then use these guide layers to build your final hair shapes.

The graphite modelling tools in 3ds Max are ideal for this job, with the Step-build and Conform tools enabling you to easily create geometry on the surface of another object. 3ds Max's Modifier stack comes in really handy here too: using Shell and Push modifiers fleshes out the hair in a non-destructive way and means you can keep control of the shape of the hair at the base level.
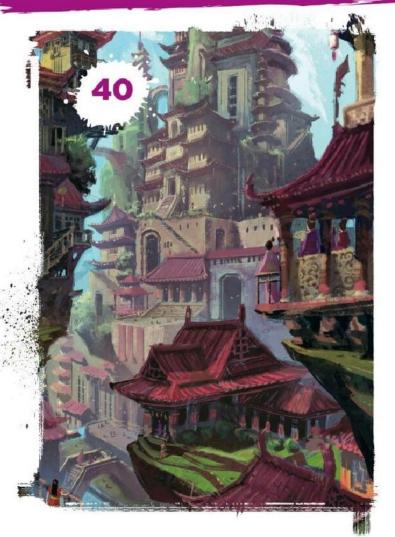


3ds Max's Modifier stack offers great control and flexibility, while the graphite modelling tools speed up the modelling process significantly.

### ● Artist's secret
### Easy dynamics

*A Soft selection on the hair ends and a Flex modifier does the job if you want to demonstrate some simple dynamics. It's possible to animate the strength of the Flex in 3ds Max if the movement is too extreme in places. Have fun experimenting.*

## Step-by-step: Use Guide geometry and Modifiers for maximum control



**1** Cut out the hairline on a copy of your character's head to make your hair base. This will provide the starting point for your hair. Next make Guide geometry layers starting at the back of the head and working up to the hair parting and fringe.



**2** The Guide layers determine the overall shape and direction of the hair. Using Step build or Snap to Surface creates hair shapes on each of the guide layers, with sections splitting apart and the hair ending in a nice mix of different points and curls.



**3** Add a Shell modifier to give the hair some thickness and use Soft selection and Push modifier to make the hair thicker at the base. Use a final edit Poly modifier to give the ends a random appearance. Use Turbosmooth to finish the look.

# Artist Portfolio

**40**

**48**

**54**



**62**

**MULAN**
"Mulan was the very first feature I worked on and this painting was done to pay homage to the film's 20th anniversary this year."

*Artist Portfolio*

# ARMAND SERRANO

The Filipino artist tells **Gary Evans** how he went from failed civil engineer to successful Disney animator, and why it's time to go freelance...

Armand Serrano spent 13 weeks, without much sleep, working up a new portfolio. He made three copies. The first, he took to Warner Bros. – the California studio that had just finished 1996 film Space Jam. Armand sat down with the man who "filtered" portfolios. This man turned the pages, closed the book, and then shook his head. "Sorry, kid," he told Armand. "You don't have it."

Armand emailed the other portfolios. After a week, DreamWorks phoned. The company liked his work. But because Armand worked mainly in TV – at Philippine Animation Studio and Hanna-Barbera's studio in Manila – DreamWorks wasn't sure if he'd cut it in film. So it invited him in for a test.

The phone rang again a couple of hours later. Armand had sent the third portfolio to Disney, who loved it. Disney offered him a job in Florida, and because of his TV experience, it wasn't an entry-level role, but a position as key assistant. "I guess," Armand says, "the rest is history."

## HOLLYWOOD WAS A LONG SHOT

Armand's mother, a teacher, likes to say Armand started drawing at two years old. He grew up in Manila. His dad, an accountant, would bring home used papers from work so Armand could draw on the "clean side".

**NEED FOR SPEED**
An image from Armand's collection of speed paintings. No matter how busy he is with work, he makes time to create personal pieces.

**MERIDA**
"I wasn't sure what title to name this piece. But I always love the personality of Merida from Pixar's Brave, especially her curly hair, so that's what the title ended up being."

➤➤ Armand saw Star Wars at 10. He became aware of concept art and dreamed of working in the movies. Except, he never took it seriously. "Hollywood," he says, "seemed like a very long shot."

Armand is also a multi-instrumentalist, so he wanted to do a degree in fine art or music. His dad suggested something more practical. Armand picked civil engineering, but stuck with the music, played in an 80s band, grew his hair long, dyed it red, and skipped his mandatory military service. But university didn't go well. It took him almost seven years to complete the five-year course. In that final year, Armand says, "I cleaned up my act" – met his wife, did his time in the military and got an engineering

**Artist PROFILE**

**Armand Serrano**
LOCATION: US
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Alex Niño, Sergio Toppi, JC Leyendecker, NC Wyeth and Dean Cornwell
SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop, Procreate
WEB: www.armandserrano.com

**SPEEDY PLANE**
"Speed painting is a tool to keep my passion burning, my sanity intact, and explore other techniques that could benefit me and help me continue to grow."

> 66 I began to understand the process… that's when I decided this was my career 99

apprenticeship – but he still failed his exams to become a working engineer. Then he heard about an animation studio opening up in Manila.

In 1990, Armand got a trainee job at Fil-Cartoons, the Manila studio set up by Hanna-Barbera. Armand worked in animation for a year, then moved to the layout department. He designed backgrounds, characters poses and played around with camera mechanics. He worked on Yogi Bear, The Addams Family, and Captain Planet and the Planeteers. "I loved it," he says. "I felt

I began to have an understanding of design and had a handle on the overall production process. That's when I decided this was my career of choice."

Philippine Animation Studio offered him a job in 1994 as head of its layout department for shows by Marvel. He worked on X-Men, Fantastic Four: The Animated Series, and Biker Mice From Mars, now alongside artists from the US and Europe, who encouraged Armand to move to America.

He sent applications to 30 different US studios. Most said the quality of his work wasn't good enough. But a small video game company called 7th Level offered him a job. Armand moved with his wife and two-year-old daughter to a one-bedroom apartment in Burbank, California.





**CAVALRY CHARGE**
"One thing I never want to happen is for me to stagnate creatively. My inspirations stem from ideas and themes that excites me to draw when I was a kid. Mostly revolving around history."

**ANIMAL CRACKER**
*"I did all the production design pieces for Animal Crackers in black and white, so the directors and I could focus mainly on the design language during the early stages of pre-production."*

# THE EVOLUTION OF AN ARTIST
**Armand traces the roots of this scene back through his career to find the moments that shaped it**

"I created this image for the film Animal Crackers (aka Magic Circus). I can trace the evolution of this piece back to two experiences in my career.

I worked on Disney Animation's Lilo & Stitch. I was a 2D layout journeyman, designing the backgrounds, the character layouts for the animators, and the camera mechanics for the shots. It proved to be a defining moment for me as an artist.

Working under production designer Paul Felix shifted my style and overall understanding on how I approach design. Felix's work made a huge impact on my design sensibilities. What I learned from the overall experience of the film, I still carry with me now: control, clarity of shapes, playfulness in forms, proper flow, defining values through consistency in lighting, how values carry the weight of colour... I could go on.

The Animal Crackers images clearly shows that a touch of that Lilo style will always be part of me. That film also gave me the opportunity to do visual development, which opened the door for me to move into that field.

Then second was the experience of working on Sony Pictures Animation's Surf's Up. This was the film where I was involved fully in visual development and production design from the very start of pre-production, until almost the very end of production. That's when my transition from a traditional artist to a digital artist was fully realised."
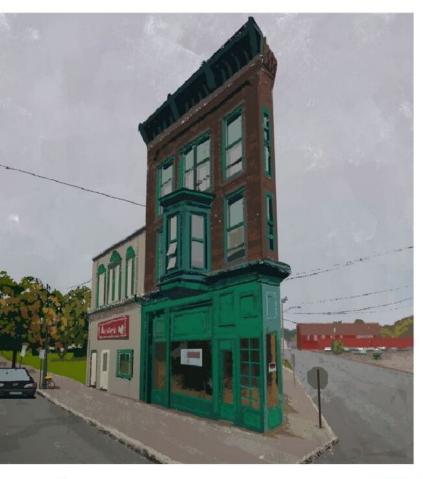
Alongside the 7th Level job, Armand took a 13-week course at an animation school. The course helped him understand the differences between TV animation and feature film animation. But he spent much of those 13 weeks working on a new portfolio, which he sent out to three different studios.

## OSCAR-WINNING MOVIES
Armand took his family to Florida in 1997 to work on the Disney movie that became Mulan. He was promoted to layout journeyman and earned credits on Tarzan, Lilo & Stitch and Brother Bear. He learned a lot working alongside some of the best artists in the world. He also began to feel validated in choosing animation.

In 2004, Disney decided to close its Florida studio. But Sony Pictures ➡➡

**MURMILLO**
*"This was a live demo piece during one of my online CG Masters Academy class. I teach the effective use of composition to control the perception of the audience and focus on the story."*

*"The idea was steampunk meets Mad Max: that mental juggling of concepts, juxtapositions and the 'why not?', which together make an idea interesting and fresh."*

➤➤ Animation offered Armand a job back in Los Angeles. He tried out different fields – visual development artist, conceptual art director and production designer – and worked on more big movies: Surf's Up, Hotel Transylvania and Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs.

A big movie takes roughly five years to make. Three years goes into the story and character development, then the visual development team gets to work: the character and environment designers. "That's where I come in," Armand says, "creating a believable world that the characters will live in."

He was still at Sony when he was finally granted US citizenship. This gave him new opportunities – to work in other industries, to travel more widely, and to teach.

Armand returned to Disney in 2013. Many of his old colleagues from Florida now worked as art directors, producers and directors. His second

**HOPPERESQUE**
*Armand regularly visits museum and galleries to learn from master painters. This concept is reminiscent of Edward Hopper's work.*

**SPIDER**
*"Another speed painting of a wild concept. This was inspired by those giant spiders in old movies and spiced up with my love for history. Fun."*



66 **That's where I come in… creating a believable world the characters will live in** 99

spell was even more successful than the first: he worked on Oscar-winning films Big Hero 6 and Zootopia. Despite all this, Armand decided to leave and become a freelancer. "For the past 20-something years," Armand says, "I've always been known as the Disney guy. I believe it's now time for me to pursue other creative opportunities."

An average workday at one of the big studios was spent mostly in his office. But what he liked best was the chance to collaborate with all the other
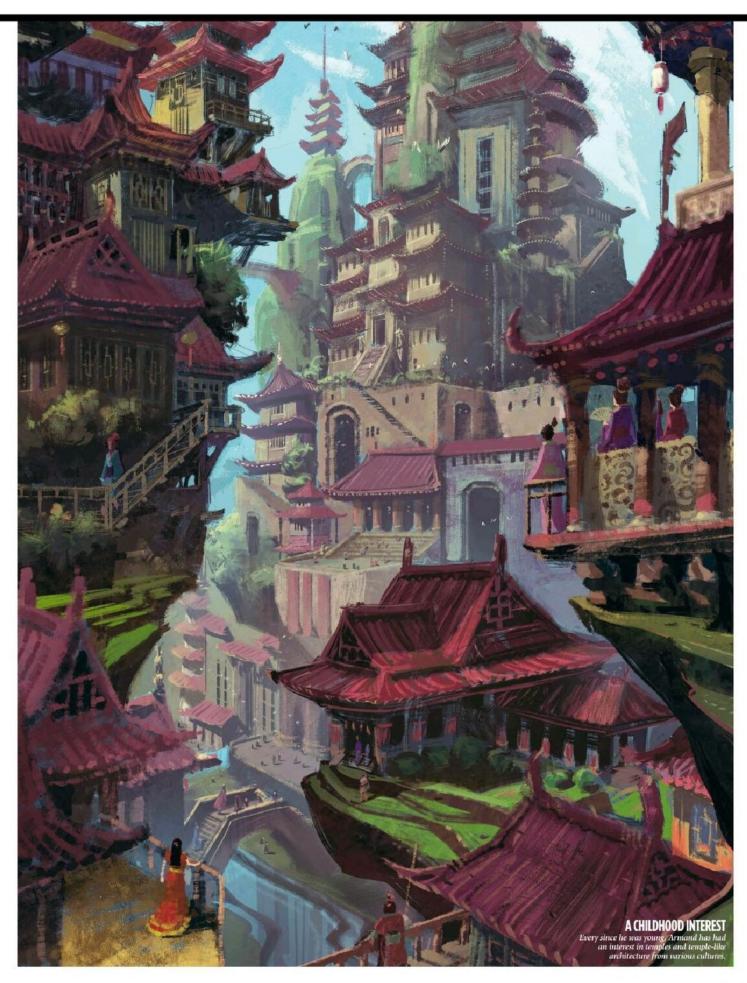
departments. Now he's a freelancer, he's in his home studio all day and collaboration happens online. He starts work early and keeps a calendar in his eyeline to stay on top of deadlines. Exercise helps him stay physically fit. In the studio, his Chihuahua keeps him company.

**SANITY INTACT**
Many of the things that excite him as a kid excite him now. He's into history: tanks, aircraft, uniforms. He keeps ➤➤

### A CHILDHOOD INTEREST
*Every since he was young, Armand has had an interest in temples and temple-like architecture from various cultures.*

# STAGING A MONSTROUS BATTLE
Armand reveals how he set up and developed this many-headed fight scene...



## 1 INK, INITIAL FEEL, TONE
The original drawing is in ink. This is my starting point. Here I set up and re-stage the initial feel I had for the environment. The next step is tonal value with some sort of ambient occlusion.

## 2 TEXTURE, REFERENCE, FOCUS
Now I work out some textures. I do this by photo bashing. I grab a reference photo that I'll use to work up colour and light. I get painting on the main areas of focus, starting with the creatures.

## 3 CREATURE, SUBJECT
Along the way, I continuously modify the three heads of the creature, as well as the swordsman. At this stage, I'll also get to work painting the main subject of the piece.

## 4 SECONDARY FOCUS, LAST TOUCHES
Here, I establish overlaps and highlights on the secondary area of focus. Final touches now: small modifications of detail, a subtle vignette and a slight shift in temperature.

**ARRIVAL OF THE QUEEN**
*As a teacher and mentor, Armand tells students that good concept art is built on great story, typified by this narrative-led piece.*



**BATTLESHIPS**
*"I use Oculus Medium a lot. The time I'd usually spend on a piece – by just using references and freehand – was exponentially reduced with the aid of VR modelling."*

➤➤ a library of photo references, but doesn't horde. Regular hard-drive clearances feel refreshing. He does have a ton of art supplies, though he doesn't use them often. For sketches on the go, he uses Procreate with an Apple Pencil on his iPhone or iPad Pro. He keeps plenty of art books within reach on his worktables. He has two stations: one with a MacBook Pro attached to a Wacom Cintiq Pro and a 22-inch HD Dell monitor, and another with Oculus VR gear attached to a 15-inch Alienware gaming laptop.

The best bit of being freelance is the chance to explore new technology. VR speeds up his design process by bringing him inside his art. He finds it "excitingly wild and useful", the best thing since Photoshop and the drawing

> ❝ Being a visual storyteller is like music. I have to become a good composer ❞

tablet. However busy Armand is, he sets aside time for personal work: "It's a tool to keep my passion burning, my sanity intact and to explore other techniques that could benefit me and help me continue to grow. One thing I never want to happen is for me to stagnate creatively."

For an aspiring artist, it's not much use being told: "Sorry, kid, you don't have it." A young artist needs to know

what it is they don't have and how they can get it. Armand wants to help.

"The foundations of great art always remain the same," he explains. "Story or idea, design and execution, through visual storytelling. I want them to feel, and take hold of the message that I want to convey."

### FACING THE MUSIC

"What makes concept art is the word concept," continues Armand. "Meaning art with a story or idea. Without concept, it's just a good piece of art. Sadly, I'd see so much concept-less concept art out there that it pushed me to teach and share my own

experiences and what I've learned through the years, which a young artist may never learn in an art school."

As a teacher and mentor, Armand shares the knowledge he built over a 20-year career in animation. But he's found that his short-lived career as an engineer also helps. His work has strong sense of "functionality and structural believability".

There's even a bit of music in there too: "Being a visual storyteller is like music. I have to become a good composer in order to drive my visual composition to affect my audience to grasp the story I want to tell and experience the emotion." ◢

*Artist Portfolio*
# ROMAIN VAN DEN BOGAERT

**Gary Evans** meets the Frenchman whose highly unusual career change made it possible for him to carve out a successful niche as a sculptor

Romain Van den Bogaert grew up in the suburbs of Paris. He liked role-playing games, science-fiction books and comics. At school, he excelled at science and went on to complete a degree, a master's and a Ph.D. – specialising in soil (water infiltration through soil porosity, if you want get technical.)

The Frenchman felt exhausted after completing his doctorate and took a couple of months out to consider his options. Really, he knew he'd made his decision long before: Romain decided to quit science for good and follow his boyhood passion.

"It was not my thing," he says. "Science is difficult to enter when you're not 100 per cent passionate.

> 66 **Science is difficult to enter when you're not 100 per cent passionate** 99

It's like being an artist: you have to be passionate. If you don't have any mojo, it's difficult to keep going. I chose to switch my career plan to something completely different."

He'd started playing around with miniatures aged 16, painting them at first, sculpting them later. He soon got good enough to sell his work to small companies who made role-playing games. "Instead of working in McDonald's for pocket money," he say, "two or three times a year I sold those miniatures and it paid for my holiday." Romain wanted to turn pocket money into a proper career. He gave up soil and switched to clay.

## CAREER CHANGE

"I just had to send a couple of emails to people I knew," Romain says, "and it filled my schedule for six months." Once he'd made the decision to quit science, he moved into a "very cool" co-working space in Lyon. He teamed up with 17 other creative people – a photographer ➤

**ESKIMO FISHERMAN**
This 2013 sculpture shows Romain's interest in indigenous cultures and the thing that ties together his varied work: detailed facial expressions.

> 66 **I'm not a fan of dark and strange horror-type characters. It's not my thing. I prefer smiling people** 99

and a graphic designer, three contemporary artists, someone who makes furniture, someone else who works in textiles …

His space is relatively small – just 12 square metres – but it's big enough for his needs. Best of all, he can borrow equipment from the other residents. "It's very cool because we can share lots of knowledge and equipment. If I want to weld something, I can. If I want advice on a new contemporary art exhibition, I can ask colleagues who work in that field."

So what sort of commission does he get? After a long pause, Romain says: "I try to avoid commissions" He laughs. Another long pause.

## MANAGING THE DAY JOB

So, how does he make a living? "I have the luxury," he says, "of working in a niche market. In that niche market – miniature art – I can directly talk with my commissioners. I have a lot of flexibly. So most of the time I have only a brief pitch to create something: 'Sculpt a dog, sculpt barbarians.' And then I do whatever."

Many of his peers, he admits, work differently. Mostly, clients want something very specific – a piece for a board game, for example – which they take to a sculptor. The sculptor follows

**TRIBAL**
Romain created this piece for MuMI, the Museum of Miniatures in Milan. He uses his vast collection of reference images to get the details just right.

**MANTA**
This sculpture, "an ageless shaman, wrapped in a richly embellished coat, calmly scrutinising the horizon," is a tribute to Jean Giraud, the artist known as Mœbius.

the client's guidelines. "I'm not interested in that kind of commission," Romain says. "So I refuse those strict guidelines. It's not my thing."

Science wasn't his thing. Commissions aren't his thing. And neither is the macabre. "I'm not the kind of guy who can relate to dark art," he says. "Some people create dark monsters and stuff. I can create monsters. My range of emotions can be neutral to joy, maybe a little bit of rage, sometimes. But I'm not a fan of dark and strange horror-type characters. It's not my thing." Finally, with a bit of

coaxing, Romain gets to the thing that is his thing: "I prefer smiling people."

## SCIENTIFIC AND IMPULSIVE

Romain's self-taught. He learned and keeps learning from his extensive collection of reference images. It could be a simple pose, a gesture, perhaps something to do with anatomy. He often sculpts with a reference by his side – though the finished sculpture probably won't not look anything like this reference.

Romain uses a polymer, oven-baked clay called Super Sculpey and has





**MONKEY KING**
Romain gives a punky makeover to this cult TV character from the 1970s, created with miniature manufacturer NutsPlanet.

# SCULPTING WITCHCRAFT
## Romain explains how an old lady became a witch with a backstory



**1 The subject**
I want to sculpt a mysterious old lady. I block out the main structures of her face, outlining the features of an elderly character.



**2 Internal structures**
I bear in mind the internal structures, bones and landmarks, and to focus on bigger planes and contrast, light and shadow. I smooth the surface and begin to add a new layer of information: secondary volumes, big wrinkles.



**3 Backstory**
I add clothes and drapery. I define a hand gesture and a little a bird to introduce more backstory to what's now a witch.



**4 Adding details**
I define the drapery and bring in the textile pattern. I finish the hand gesture and details, as well as more intricate details on the face, such as pores of the skin and little wrinkles. The bird is still very rough, because I'm not sure which species I want it to be (at the moment it's supposed to be a giant kingfisher.)



**5 Smoothing it out**
I smooth the details with alcohol and turpentine. The model is still unbaked. I change my mind about the bird and settle on a puffin.



**6 Applying the finishing touches**
I bake the model and engrave the superfine textile patterns. All that's left to do is add the open wing of the puffin to the piece.

# THE EMERGENCE OF A PATTERN
The French sculptor on his vast, ever-growing collection of references

Romain likes to talk science. He very much likes to talk sculpture. But the thing he seems to get most excited about is his constantly expanding collection of reference images. How did it begin?

"I'm never satisfied," the Frenchman says. "I'm always looking for new techniques and artists." This need to always be improving is why the self-taught artist started to collect images in the first place. He'd use them to copy poses, gestures and anatomy.

Mostly, he gathered these images online. But he tore them from books too. The scientist in him came out as he classified the images into folders by topic: sailors, battles, aboriginals. But, now, even as a leader in his field, he continues to build the collection.

He constantly refers to these images, either while working or when looking for inspiration for new ideas: "I'm currently creating a kind of personal database of patterns," he says, "featuring floral patterns, vegetal patterns, organic patterns..."

Romain expanded this newest folder to include newly discovered textile patterns and old wallpaper designs. He's now figuring out ways of incorporating the images into his work. He says: "I'm fascinated by those little repetitive features we can see almost everywhere in nature."



**NARCISSA, QUEEN OF THE WHISPERS**
*Romain created the piece in his preferred clay, Super Sculpey. It was commissioned by Black Crow Miniatures.*



**TURKANA WOMEN**
*This detailed sculpture of a Kenyan woman was particularly painstaking: "It was a long and hard journey to complete this project," Romain says, "but also satisfying."*

> 66 I pay attention to the mood of the characters. I'm interested in the face and the facial emotions that are on show 99

➤➤ two ways of working. The first is very considered, methodical, scientific. He collects and catalogues lots of images, which he looks over again and again, knowing they'll help him in some way when it comes to starting the project.

The second way is more impulsive. He sits down with the clay, lets his hands get to work, and sees what happens. He could start with a form or a face, maybe a smiling person, and the concept evolves from there. With both methods, when it comes to refining the piece, he'll keep referring to his collection of reference images. Sometimes he makes casts of the miniatures himself, sometimes he sends them to a caster. Same goes for painting. It depends on time and the quantity involved.

## BALANCING WORK WITH LIFE
Every weekday, he gets to work at 9am and knocks off 7pm. It's important to separate his work life from his private life. Living and working at home would drive him crazy. "I'm not someone who works all night long," he says.
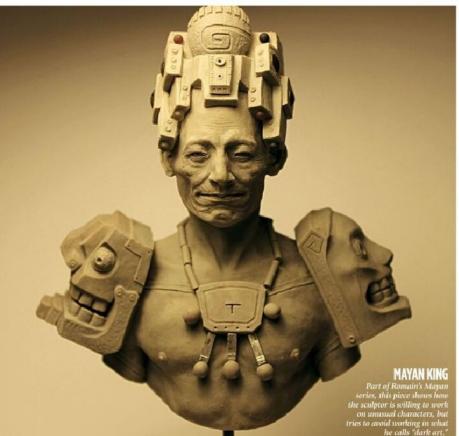
He books out bigger areas in his co-working space for teaching. This is something he started back in 2013, before he quit science to sculpt full-time. He found it a challenge: organising his skills in his head, then relaying them to people in a simple, understandable way. "It was very rewarding because I learned more than the students in those workshops. It gave structure to my knowledge and enabled me to go further, to really dig into specific subjects, such as a particular facial image or a certain composition or gesture." In addition, he admits that teaching offers extracurricular perks: "It's very cool to fly to lots of different cities and countries and get paid to do that."

Romain is almost certainly the only former soil scientist working as a

**ETERNAL RENEW**
This work-in-progress shot shows a Mayan-influenced character, one of a pair, the other being her husband. Romain will go on to add an intricate headdress of Andean flowers.

**DEMON**
One of Romain's most menacing figures – though it still appears to be smiling – this elaborate demon was created for MuMI.

**MAYAN KING**
Part of Romain's Mayan series, this piece shows how the sculptor is willing to work on unusual characters, but tries to avoid working in what he calls "dark art."

**FRESH NIGHT UNDER THE MOON**
The piece is a limited edition run of 80: "The sculpture," Romain says, "depicts a woman, wrapped in a coat and admiring the moonlight."

sculptor of limited edition miniatures. He's carved out a niche for himself. But ask him exactly what that niche is and he'll struggles to put a name on. All Romain knows is that he's finally found his thing.
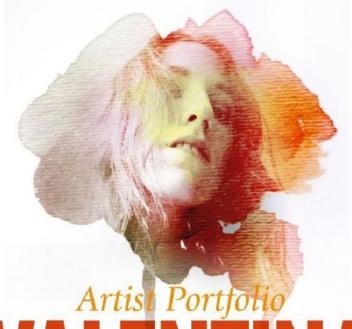
"People recognise my style very quickly in this community. It's difficult to know why, but people are constantly saying, 'I didn't see your name, but I knew it was your work.' My style is recognisable. I pay attention to the mood of the characters. I'm very interested in the face and the facial emotions that are on show.

"It doesn't' matter if it's a human, a cartoon, a monster, an animal – the emotion, the eyes are very important when I create something. My characters are on the edge, between reality and dream. I also try to make them very believable, even if they're imaginary. The word that can describe my work? Maybe it's dreamish."

**WHITE SWAN**
*"I did this for the art book THREADS. It's actually a piece that complements another work of mine called Black Swan. I mostly focused on details, especially the character's headpiece."*

## *Artist Portfolio*
# VALENTINA REMENAR

The Croatian artists tells **Gary Evans** why great art is about much more than putting technical skills into practice

**V**alentina Remenar is thinking over a big question: what separates good art from great art? It's something that the Croatian has spent years trying to work out. A painting can look pretty, be full of detail and technically flawless, but still not be great.

She'll often scrap a piece completely – no matter how much work she's put into it. Whether's she's working on illustration, concept art or graphic design, Valentina will start over as many times as it takes to get the story right. Story, she says, makes great art.

"I'll literally start the painting from scratch several times until I'm satisfied with it," the artist says. "I always find it hard to portray a story as I pictured it."

So to make great art you need to know how to get that story out of your head and on to the page without losing any of its essence in the process. But how's it done?

### THE DOODLER

Valentina always doodled. Early on, she drew fantasy stuff, the surreal, lots of monsters, but also real-world animals and natural environments. "I enjoyed drawing mostly things that didn't exist in the real world. Now I'm older, I still keep drawing darker themes or pictures inspired by nature, so that part of me hasn't change much."

Valentina went to art school in Slovenia and studied graphic design. "I was always the student who had a sketchbook during lectures and kept drawing while trying to listen at the same time. It was lucky that my ➤
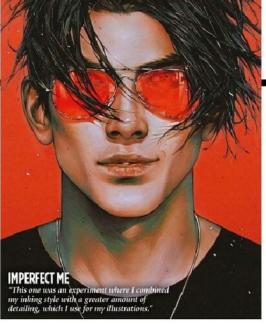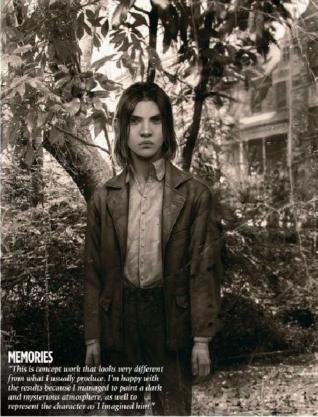
**BANG**
*"Here's my character Jarrett – I experimented with a cyberpunk look as I painted him. I especially had a lot of fun designing his robotic leg."*

**IMPERFECT ME**
*"This one was an experiment where I combined my inking style with a greater amount of detailing, which I use for my illustrations."*



**MEMORIES**
*"This is concept work that looks very different from what I usually produce. I'm happy with the results because I managed to paint a dark and mysterious atmosphere, as well to represent the character as I imagined him."*



lecturers weren't bothered by it." She didn't complete the course because of bad health. She needed surgery. It could have ended her art career before it started. But while she was laid up Valentina kept drawing. Six years ago she made the move from hobbyist to full-time professional artist.

"I didn't think much about drawing for money, so I lived a simple life with not much money in my pocket. As a kid I lacked self-esteem. I never felt

> ## 66 As a kid I lacked self-esteem. I never felt that my art was good enough 99

**ELVEN PRINCE**
*"I got the urge to design a regal elf character. His helmet reflects his high-ranking status and is inspired by nature."*

that my art was good enough, so it was my dad who actually pushed me towards freelancing career and gave me more confidence."
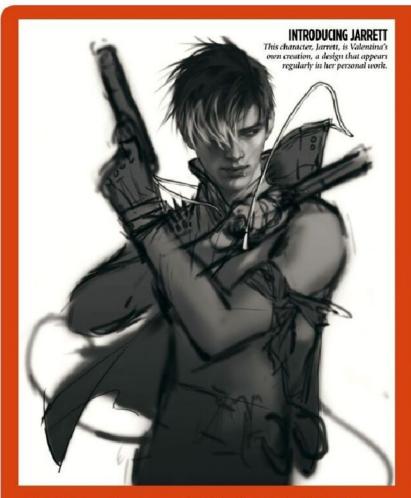
## ALL KINDS OF GENRES
For her first freelance job, she designed playing cards for West Studio, a visual development company. "It was a new experience for me because the card styles were different from what I was used to painting, but I had a great time and learnt a lot." She's gone on to work on posters and book covers, in character design and game concepts. Her clients include painting software company Celsys, charity Amnesty International and 3D Total.

Valentina's personal work tends to be darker. She likes mystery. Projects done in her own time are ideal for experimenting with concepts and characters, but also to keep her eye sharp and – conversely – to relax from the pressure of deadlines.

To get away from work, she works. Had she not made it as a professional artist, she'd still be drawing every single day as a hobbyist, creating things that don't exist in the real world. Look at her portfolio and you'll see she's now very comfortable working in countless different styles: sci-fi, fantasy, realism, tonal drawings, matte paintings and more. (For further proof of her skills as a polymath,

**INTRODUCING JARRETT**
*This character, Jarrett, is Valentina's own creation, a design that appears regularly in her personal work.*



**A MAN OF MANY FACES**
*Valentina likes to riff on this figure design – trying out different genres while ensuring that the core of the character remains the same.*

# JARRETT: ARMED AND VERY DANGEROUS

**Discover how Valentina created a cyberpunk vibe with added danger for her character Jarrett**
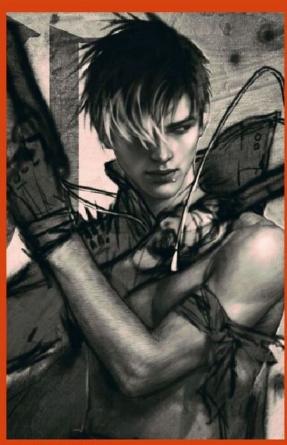
"When I start working on a personal piece, my progress can be very chaotic. But for this piece, Anarchist, I set myself a pretty simple concept: I wanted to draw my original character Jarrett in a composition that would resemble a poster. I sketched him in a dynamic pose and added elements that would show his personality and dangerous style of living, but that would also bring a cyberpunk vibe to the scene.

I usually start doing my artworks in black and white, and here I used the same technique. I love using Adjustment layers for adding tones and slight coloration to the black and white sketch and here I used several layers with Color Lookup adjustment layers. I experimented with different colour profiles, but I also introduce adjustment layers in different blending modes such as Lighten, Saturation and Darker Color, because colours would then apply to different areas.

When I was satisfied with the black and white sketch it was time to add some colours. I decided to keep the colour palette very simple and I used only warm colours, with a red colour as an accent. Red can be great when trying to symbolically portray more a dangerous atmosphere because it will remind the viewer of blood. After my colours were established I detailed the piece with the Soft round pressure opacity brush.

For my finishing touches, I added Noise, Sharpen and some chromatic aberration, while moving the channel layers to achieve slight coloration on the edges."



**TARGET PRACTICE**
*Valentina use light to focus the viewer's attention on to one side of Jarrett's face and his gun. This is a composition technique that she uses regularly.*

**BLACK IS THE SOUL**

*"I've tried to paint my character Ash as a demonic angel many times over the years, but I've never been totally happy with the results. This is one of the few attempts that almost meets my expectations, so I'm quite fond of it."*

**OLD AND NEW**
*"A recent piece for Slovenian magazine MAGnet. I wanted to portray contemporary and traditional Japanese culture in a single image."*

➤ note that Valentina's also fluent in English, Slovenian, Croatian, and related languages such as Serbian and Bosnian.)

"I'm a person who likes to draw all kinds of genres, so I usually keep practising all of them every now and then, or I combine them. Technically, I do them almost identically, and perhaps only hyper-realism would stand out because then I try to portray something as lifelike as possible. But I paint all other genres in a similar style."

## HATCHING A PLAN

Working in Photoshop, to create a texture similar to traditional pencil or ink drawings, Valentina uses hatching: shading with closely spaced parallel lines. What differs from one style to the next is the amount of detail and colour. She might do simple anime drawings in two tones, but detailed illustrations with varied palette and lots of light so the lines become less visible.

**❝ I like to draw all kinds of genres, so I'll practise all of them every now and then ❞**



**DANCE WITH THE DEVIL**
*"This piece is an older work from 2014, but I still love it. It always reminds me to do larger, more complex illustrations, although more recently I've not had much time to paint."*

She likes to vary the amount of detail within a single image. This brings focus to certain parts of the drawing, such as a particular feature on a character. "If I'm working in the sci-fi genre for example, I'll place the focus on the robotic parts of their body. If it's fantasy, I'll make their outfits and armour detailed to reflect the environment that the character lives in, and what status they have."

Before Valentina paints, she tidies. She cleans her room and clears her desk every day to make sure she's not distracted in any way. Her workspace is minimalist. Everything is there for a reason: a desk lamp for working late, art books and magazines for inspiration, a male anatomy figurine for getting early characters sketches looking right. She uses a PC with an overclocked Intel Core i7-3770K ➤

**HOLY PANDA**
*Blizzard worked with DeviantART to commission artists to paint characters from World of Warcraft. Valentina's version of a Pandaren Monk garnered her a great response from her fellow artists.*

# A BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT
## A commission from Blizzard finally managed to convince Valentina that she could succeed as a full-time professional artist

"I started my freelance career about six years ago, when I was around 19 or 20 years old. Before that I was mostly a hobbyist who enjoyed drawing in my free time – I didn't think much about drawing for a living. Yet I always wanted to be an artist or an art teacher, so I always took a job that was connected with illustration or design.

There have probably been several instances that have had a positive impact on my career as an artist over the years, but the one that made me feel like that I was getting somewhere was when I was commissioned by DeviantART for Blizzard. I had to portray a Pandaren Monk from World of Warcraft.

The freedom I have while I do work for others usually depends on the client. Some

supply a highly detailed brief, complete with the concept sketch, references, mood inspiration and story all in place. And there are others who only choose to state the style in which they want me to create the artwork, and then leave the concept and everything else up to me. If I receive a very detailed brief then I try to stick with it. I usually don't have a problem with adapting to other people's ideas or styles.
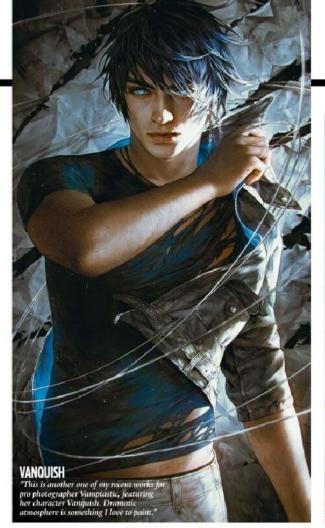
I've been part of the DeviantART community for many years, and I've known World of Warcraft since I was a little kid, so it was quite shocking when I received the commission – in a good way! I would never have even imagined that I'd get an opportunity to create art for Blizzard."
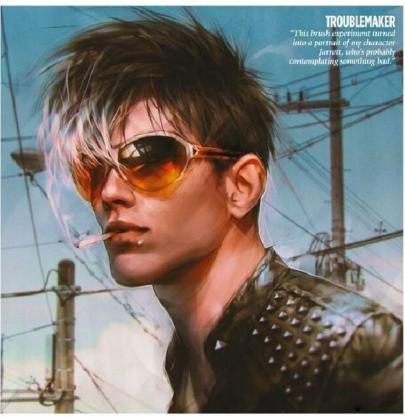
CPU with 32GB of RAM, a Wacom Cintiq 27QHD, a second monitor for references, and four 2TB hard drives, so she can back up her work.

She recently drew the cover artwork for Slovenian magazine MAGnet – see page 43 – mixing modern and ancient Japanese culture in a single image. It shows a man with bright hair dressed in modern clothes. But instead of a gun, he carries a traditional sword.

Valentina usually begins in monochrome. "I'm more used to painting with black and white at the start and playing a lot with the image at this stage, mostly because I want it to look good when it's printed in CMYK." But for this piece she went straight to colour after getting the lines down. She used her twin sister for reference – particularly when it came to the hands. Valentina also used herself as a second

**VANQUISH**
"This is another one of my recent works for pro photographer Vamptastic, featuring her character Vanquish. Dramatic atmosphere is something I love to paint."



**TROUBLEMAKER**
"This brush experiment turned into a portrait of my character Jarrett, who's probably contemplating something bad."



**THE KISS**
"This is one of my surreal concepts where I tried to portray the emotions that arise during a kiss."



WERE YOU FIGHTING AGAIN?

WHAT?! THERE'S NO WAY THAT I'M GOING!

NO! I UH... FELL.

## 66 A carefully selected colour palette that portrays a concept clearly is what ties my work together 99

reference with a rough image made in DAZ Studio. Working over two days, she put about 25 hours into the piece.

### ANOTHER BIG QUESTION

Valentina Remenar is thinking over another big question: working in so many different genres, what ties her work together? She has an answer for this straight away. Once she's got the concept for a piece, Valentina picks out a colour palette to match. If the image is, say, cheerful or romantic, she'll go for light, more vibrant colours. The opposite for something more sinister.
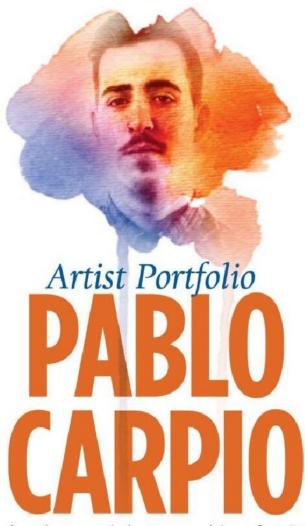
Colour unites the work she does commercially and personally. It bridges the gap between the story in her head and the picture on the page. It can make good art great.

**TEENAGER PROBLEMS**
"This is the type of sketch I produce when I'm busy with other projects. They don't take up too much of my time and enable me to practise drawing facial expressions."

"Atmosphere and the colour palette that I decide to use is usually based on the artwork's concept. A carefully selected colour palette that portrays this concept clearly is what ties my work together.

"And when storytelling and technical skill combine – when those two things come together – art can be more than great."

## Artist Portfolio

# PABLO CARPIO

From having no job to working for Disney and Marvel – **Gary Evans** learns how this artist's Hollywood gamble paid off...

P ablo Carpio had a plan. He'd use the money he put aside for university to pay for a trip to Hollywood. The young concept artist would then go to all the big studios, meet all the right people, and get his big break in the film business.

The Spaniard touched down in Los Angeles. Reality hit. He was alone and had no idea where to go or who to see.

He needed help. Pablo called up a few people from the digital art community – artists he'd met online and at events. They called up friends, who called up their friends, and pretty soon he had a meeting at game developers Naughty Dog and Riot Games. Then Pablo found himself in Burbank, at the headquarters of Disney Studios.

"At that point I didn't have any job," he says. "Three years later I've been involved in the creation of three films from Disney's franchises."
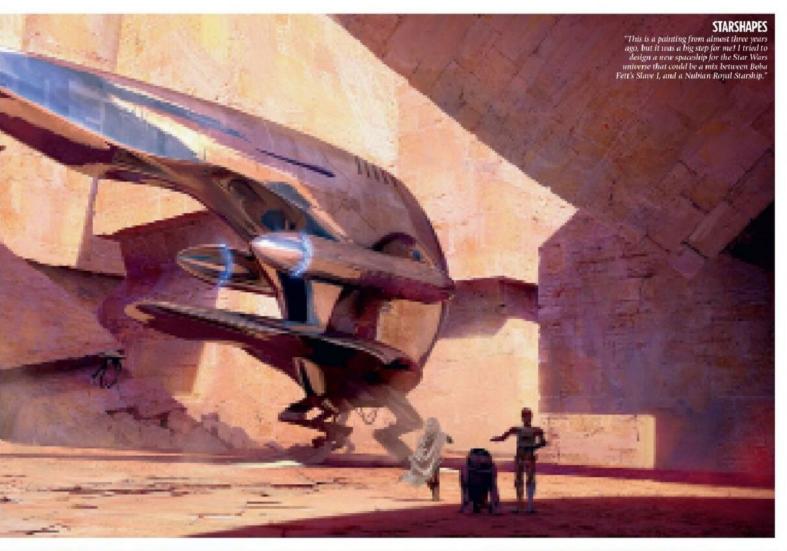
Pablo grew up in an upper-middle class family in Madrid. He described himself as a rebel without a cause – until he found art. People noticed he could draw, so he worked at it. The more hours he put into art, the more people noticed.
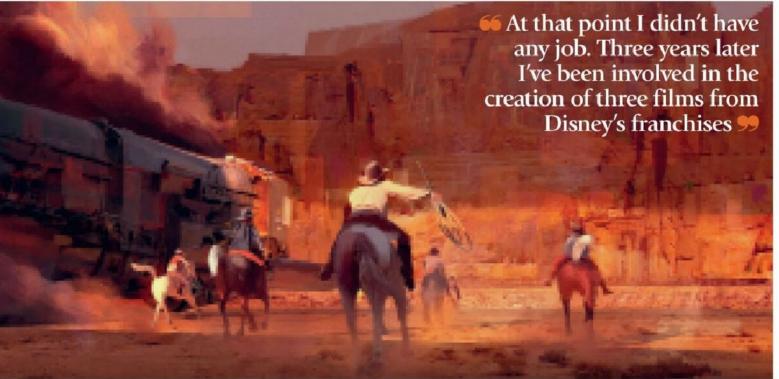
"It was just me having fun and having the curiosity to know what ➤➤

## Artist PROFILE

**Pablo Carpio**
**LOCATION:** Spain
**FAVOURITE ARTISTS:** Edward Hopper, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Francis Bacon, Asher Brown Durand, Frank Tenney Johnson and Jeremy Lipking
**SOFTWARE USED:** ZBrush, Cinema 4D, OctaneRender, Photoshop
**WEB:** www.pablocarpioart.com





**COMFORT ZONE**
*"I would say that this painting is totally inside my comfort zone: orange tones, sunset light and a Western theme."*

> 66 At that point I didn't have any job. Three years later I've been involved in the creation of three films from Disney's franchises 99

**TRIBUTE**
*"This was a gift for a friend to use it for his magazine cover: a tribute to Mark Maggiori's Western landscapes."*



would happen if I could do it a bit better the following day," Pablo says.

He painted Warhammer miniatures, drew copies of the characters from Magic: The Gathering cards, and got into gaming during the PlayStation and PlayStation 2 eras – playing games like Spyro, Tekken and Crash Bandicoot. His art improved, but his schoolwork suffered. "Most people around me thought that I would end up living under a bridge if I kept painting, and not doing anything else."

After high school, Pablo studied fine art at the Complutense University of Madrid. This wasn't like school. Instead of maths and physics, it taught sculpture and art history. He excelled at his studies. Pablo grew up in an environment that valued a university education, so when he graduated in 2014, it earned him some respect. It didn't last long, though. That same environment also valued money. "The idea of being a successful artist was basically nonexistent among my friends and family."

At university, he got into digital art. All those miniatures, trading cards, computer games – somebody had to

> **❝ I discovered they were designed by real human beings, not by ancient gods ❞**
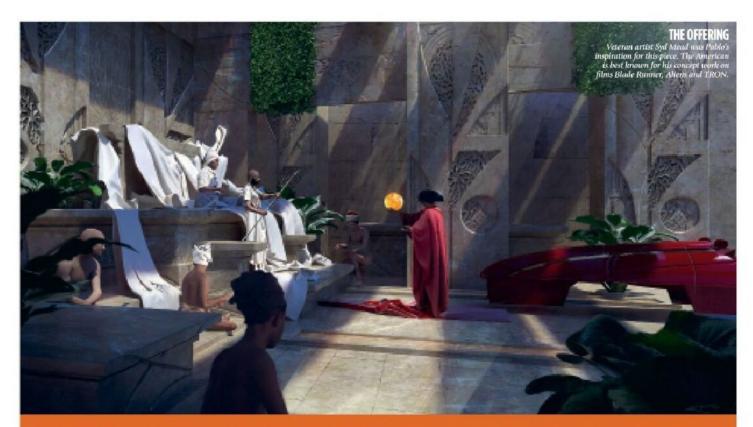
**HIDDEN DEPTH**
*"While working at Marvel I started pushing my 3D skills way more than before, trying to create different characters just as a training exercise. This is one of them."*

draw them. "I discovered they were designed by real human beings with a salary, and 20 days of holidays a year! Not by ancient gods that had brought them as gifts from the sky. Suddenly, painting and designing monsters had a real purpose. I had an objective for the first time in my life."

**ZERO IMPACT**
Pablo spent several years trying and failing to break into the games industry. There were lots of rejections. People tried to make him work for free, even steal his art. He wanted a job at a small independent developer, or even a job in game publicity or advertising. "My expectations weren't higher than

# PERFECTLY COMPOSED

Pablo explains how he uses light and colour to lead the viewer's eye and create a strong focal point

"This is a painting that I did last year, inspired by Syd Mead's work. I tried to make a composition with a definite focal point, which can be tricky because symmetrical shapes tend to make images less dynamic.

As always in my work, I start with a 3D base, throw in a render for the main light and colour, and then paint over it later in Photoshop. My idea was to use colour to hide the guidelines, and light and shapes to push the composition. If you link the heads of the characters, you unveil an arrow pointing to the ball in the middle of the image, which is the focal point.
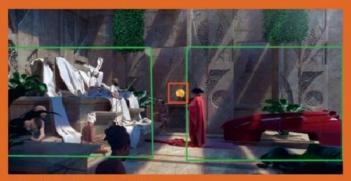
The repetition of the light and its direction is supposed to give narrative structure to the image, leading the eye from right to left, as it travels from the vehicle to the guy in red, and from the guy in red to the ones who are receiving the offering.

The colour scheme is basic, so it clearly separates the characters. One side of the image is white and the other red, and the ball is the only object in the composition that's a different colour."



**DEVELOPING A STRONG FOCAL POINT**
*Pablo loves employing circles in his work. The artist uses them as the key focal points, around which the action in the composition takes place.*



**BRINGING A COMPOSITION TO LIFE**
*"I love working up the composition, colour and light. Keyframe and environment work appeals, too, so in my personal work I try to make all these factors work together."*



**THE LONG ROAD TO ARTISTIC SUCCESS**
*Pablo spent five years creating and sharing pieces like The Offering before he received any interest from video game companies. But all that hard work and determination has finally paid off.*

➤➤ that," Pablo admits. "The beginning was tough: no contacts, almost zero impact on social media, and zero trust in myself and my abilities."

It caused problems with his family. After several arguments, they agreed to let him stay at home without getting a "real job." Every day for the next three years he worked on his art. He drew and painted and hoped an opportunity would eventually come his way. He made friends in the online digital art community. He went to events and met them in person.

"I started to understand how the business works, and how big video game companies and movie productions were not that far away. It was just about pushing your skills to the limit and knocking on the right doors at the right time."

Finally, Ubisoft Montreal emailed. The game developer behind the Far Cry, Prince of Persia and Assassin's Creed franchises invited him to work as a freelance concept artist. "I signed the contracts and two days later I was working on a AAA video game. Sometimes reality hits you like a truck. But in a good way."

### CONCEPT ART IS IDEAS

Pablo works in both 2D and 3D. He has a simple setup: a tablet, laptop and monitor. The average piece takes him three days to complete: a day for sketches and 3D layouts, a day for detailed 3D modelling and light rendering, and another for photobashing and 2D painting.

He prefers 2D for concept art, but by working in 3D, he can produce lots ➤➤

> 66 **The beginning was tough: no contacts, almost zero impact on social media, and zero trust in myself** 99

**INSPIRED BY ANASTASIA**
*"I painted this while visiting some friends in Berlin. I took inspiration from some key scenes in the animated children's film Anastasia."*

**DEMACIA**
*"Another painting from the series for League of Legends, of the Demacia landscape. I tried to adapt the colour and lighting to previous concepts created by the Riot team."*

**BRAVE NEW WORLDS**
*"Since I was a child, I was attracted to the idea of translating thoughts into paintings. I had the urge to make real all the ideas and worlds that I was building on my mind."*

**A NEW VIEW**
*"This painting was a way to learn about scale and distant points of view, because these are topics I rarely tackle in my art. I used grey and a diffuse lighting scheme to achieve a more moody-looking scene."*

➤➤ of images very quickly and very accurately, which is important in game development when time is tight. For him, the idea is always more important than the medium.

There's a difference, the artist says, between drawing something just because "it looks badass" and drawing something because you want to communicate. And this is what great concept art should do: use design language, shapes, composition and

**GETTING DEEP**
*"This was an exercise in depth and scale. I was inspired by the art of Nick Gindraux for Uncharted 4, which is one of my favourite video games."*

storytelling to say something, to convey an idea. "Concept art is all about ideas," Pablo says, "not amazing renders with tons of effects."

The Spaniard's work shows us something happening, action, a moment in time. His composition gives us clues to what's going on. He believes that a varied palette of colours keeps the viewer interested. And he uses light to create mood and to guide the eye around the image.

"Apart from all of that, I love circles. Sounds weird, but you can see that all my images have circles somewhere. I think that it's a shape which can bring lots of balance, rhythm and weight to designs."

## ❝ Concept art is all about ideas, not amazing renders with tons of effects ❞



**MY PROCESS**
*"I use 3D modelling to create a base for my illustration. Next, I run a first render with basic lights and colours, then move into Photoshop where I both paint and photobash the image."*

Pablo has just completed work on movies for Pixar and Marvel Studios (unfortunately, he isn't allowed to tell us which ones). Working in these kind of collaborative environments meant that he had to adapt his ideas to fit the given project, the budget and the rest of the team.
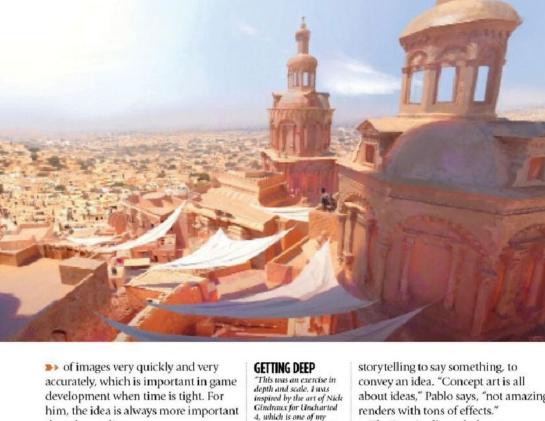
The projects posed questions, and it was his job to come up with answers. That, Pablo says, is what a concept artist does. It's not just about making nice pictures. In return, he learned countless new processes, techniques and tools to use in his work.

### THE VALUE OF GOOD IDEAS
Something Pablo found difficult was giving away his best ideas. He instinctively wanted to keep them back for personal projects. "In the end, I gain more by giving my best, rather than keeping it all to myself and delivering only half of my potential. It shows that I'm a reliable artist, which

will lead to good words from my clients that can potentially introduce me to new projects and directors.

"The result? A happy client and the chance to leave my mark in a Hollywood production."

Which finally brings us full circle – Pablo's very own Hollywood ending. Dropping everything, flying out to Los Angeles, hoping to make it in the film industry despite not having a single meeting lined up… looking back, that was a bit of a mad idea, wasn't it?

"It's all about always moving forward," he says. "It's about risking what you have and believing in your own abilities, and if you don't have an opportunity, create it by yourself. Making things happen starts by taking bold decisions.

"I happily look back and realise that it wasn't as impossible as it looked when I was still painting on my maths book at high school." ●

# ANOTHER DIMENSION

**Pablo explains why he doesn't differentiate between using 2D and 3D techniques when creating his concept artworks**

"I recently did a personal piece called Silvera. It's in honour of a song by the French band Gojira. The song inspired me to work on character design – something that I don't do frequently. I also took inspiration from the Christian folklore celebrations that happen in the south of Spain during Easter. It's a weird mix, but I had a lot of fun working on it.

A piece like this can take around three days to finish: one for drawing sketches and creating a 3D layout, another for detailed modelling in 3D of the base and rendering of the light, and then a third one to paint in 2D and apply some photobashing.

I like working on 3D more and more every day. Because I'm always improving, it offers me new options and points of view to develop my pieces. 3D is very important in a production pipeline for delivering high amounts of work in a short period of time,

and at the same time to provide mathematically accurate light conditions and colour, especially if the work is going to be used for movies or games that need a realistic look.
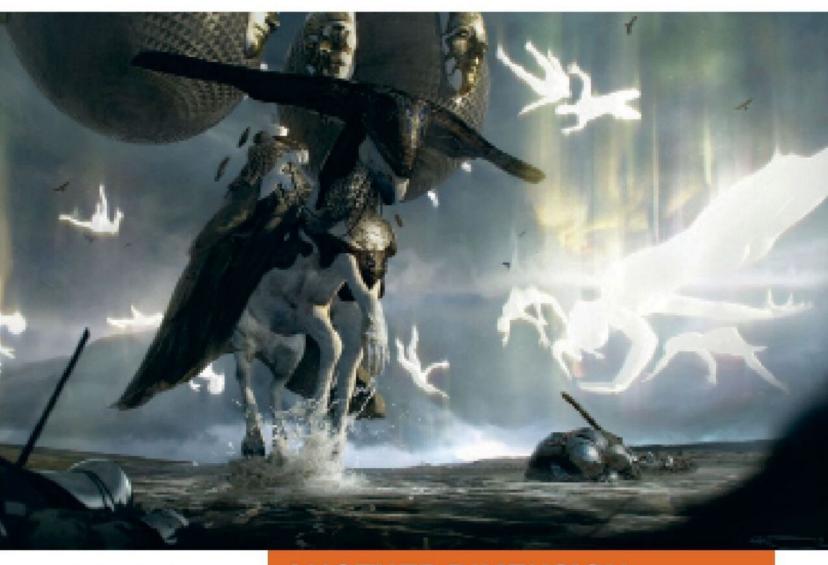
However, as a concept artist, normally you deliver your work in 2D, so it's important to also have techniques like photobashing and speed drawing to be able to show things done in very short periods of time. Sometimes preparing 3D is too much work for a morning, so you need to jump directly into 2D to be able to demonstrate certain ideas quickly to your clients.

Of course, 2D and 3D require different skills but what matters in the end is the vision of the artist, and how they control the space, the light and colour. In the end, there's no difference between charcoal or digital VFX when it comes to creating original art."

# Sketchbook



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# Sketchbook

# Tobias Kwan

Disturbing intertwining elements share page space alongside delicate portrait pieces in this New York artist's sketchbook

## Artist PROFILE

**Tobias Kwan**
LOCATION: Canada

Tobias is a freelance illustrator and concept artist from Ottawa. He studied animation at Sheridan College before moving to California to work in video games. He now lives and works in New York. Tobias' clients include Amazon Publishing, Sony Music Japan, Riot Games, Ready At Dawn Studios, Games Workshop, Cartoon Network, Sideshow Collectibles, Oakley, Li Ning, Chair Entertainment and Mattel.
**www.tobiaskwan.com**

**LADY**
"I tend to draw these kooshballs in areas where I can't think of something interesting."

**SEIFUKU**
"This was a tattoo design for a buddy of mine. Hope it turned out okay!"
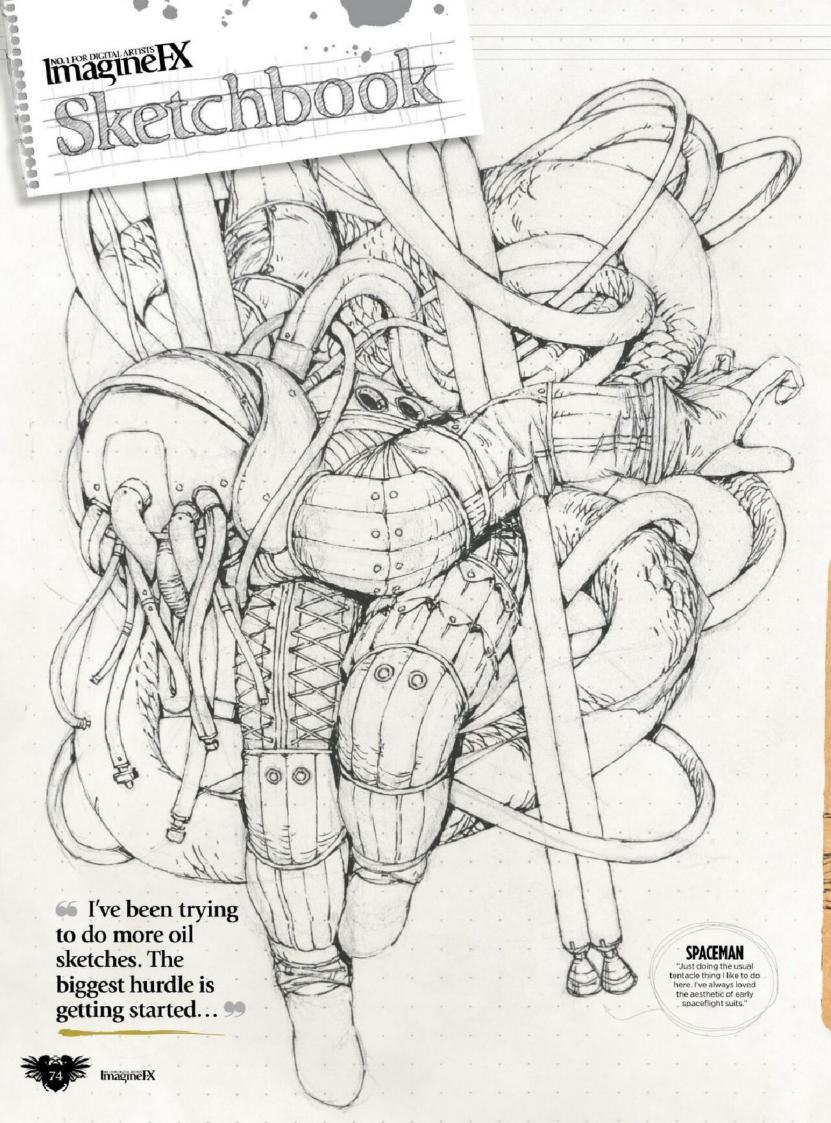
> Bit of a horror vibe going on here... She'd have trouble with enunciation

**HELPING
HANDS**

"Did this for last year's Inktober challenge.
There's a bit of a horror vibe going on
here. Looks like she would have
trouble with enunciation."

> **I've been trying to do more oil sketches. The biggest hurdle is getting started…**

**SPACEMAN**
"Just doing the usual tentacle thing I like to do here. I've always loved the aesthetic of early spaceflight suits."

**FEATHERHEAD**
"An oil sketch. I've been trying to get in the habit to doing more of these. The biggest hurdle is just getting started."

**DRESS**
"Here I tried incorporating some Gothic architectural motifs, but mostly I was just scribbling in shapes and seeing where it takes me."

**INKTOBER 28**
"This is pretty comfort zone stuff for me here: multiple limbs, tentacles, flowery bits of detail to help separate out the forms."

**FLOWERHEAD**
"Is this the kind of bedhead you get from sleeping in a pile of flowers?"

**WITCH**
"Just a witch doing her thing. I drew this after watching and really loving the 2015 film The Witch: A New-England Folktale."

> " I find it's rather therapeutic to just turn off the brain and fill in the blank spaces "

**HORSE**
"A horse of sorts with hands for feet. I really can't explain much more. There's probably some Freudian/Jungian thing going on here that I don't want to know about."

**INKTOBER 03**
"For pieces like this, I find it's rather therapeutic to just turn off the brain and fill in the blank spaces."

**CATBURST**
"I tend towards organic shapes, but I also suck at freehanding straight lines."

# Sketchbook

# Elijah McNeal

Industrial sci-fi floats this concept artist's boat, but he still makes room for the occasional character study in his sketchbook…

### Artist PROFILE

**Elijah McNeal**
LOCATION: US
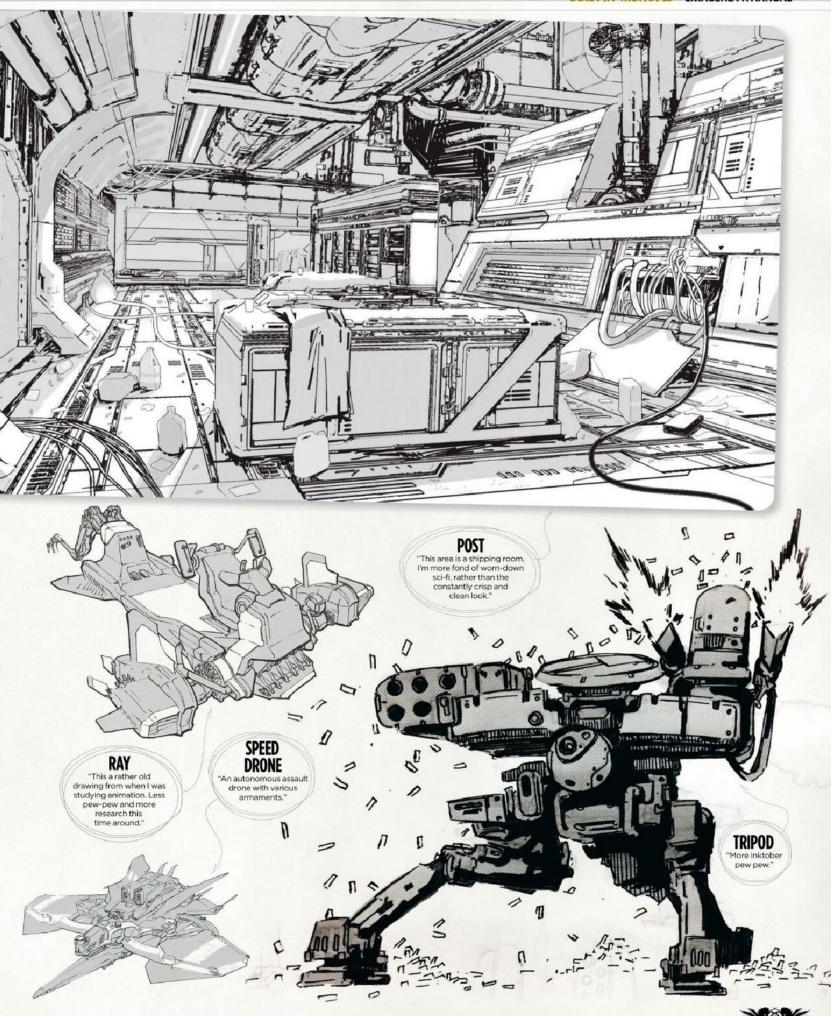
Elijah's a concept artist for the entertainment industry, and has worked on several video game, film and animation projects. His clients include Oats Studio, 20th Century Fox and Epic Games. His big break came when working on Star Citizen, and he became a full-time freelance artist after two years of studio work.
www.artstation.com/el1j4h

> " Less pew-pew and more research this time around "

**DAKKA**
"There's no such thing as enough Dakka."

**POST**
"This area is a shipping room. I'm more fond of worn-down sci-fi, rather than the constantly crisp and clean look."

**RAY**
"This a rather old drawing from when I was studying animation. Less pew-pew and more research this time around."

**SPEED DRONE**
"An autonomous assault drone with various armaments."

**TRIPOD**
"More Inktober pew pew."

# Sketchbook
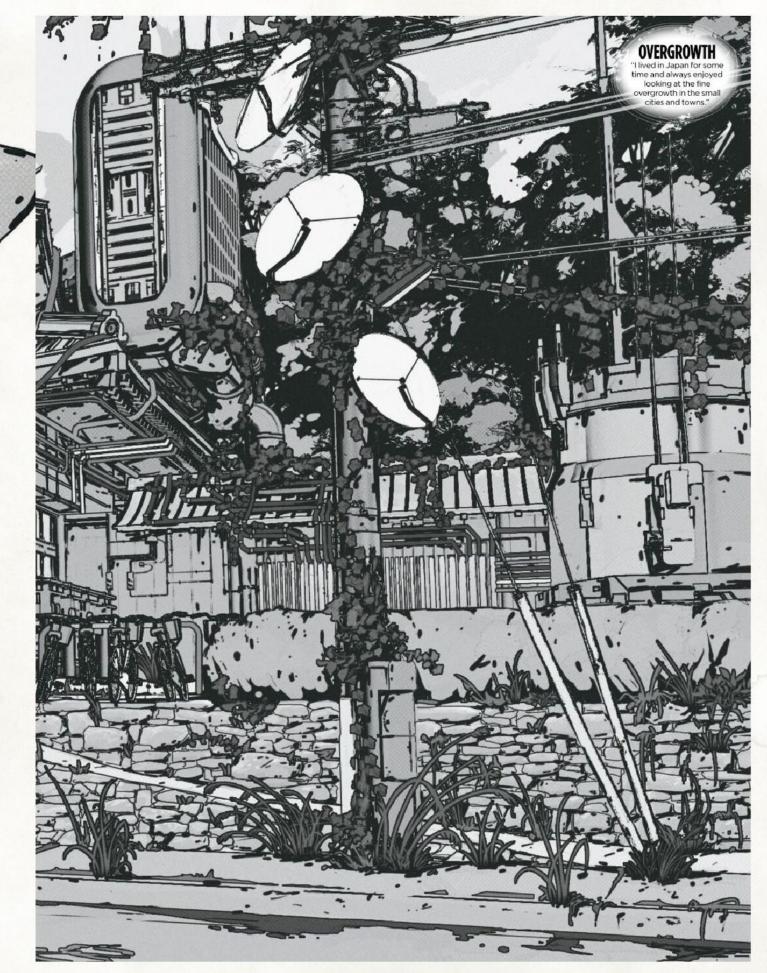
**JADE**
"Here, I made an attempt at blending sci-fi with fantasy. What better way than to throw a exosuit on to an elf?"

**SWALLOW**
"Here's a sketch I did of a cosplay artist as a character I imagined briefly."

**NOREN**
"I'll peruse the internet in search of models, like anyone else. I found a photo of this person on Instagram."

**OVERGROWTH**
"I lived in Japan for some time and always enjoyed looking at the fine overgrowth in the small cities and towns."

**HANK**

"This guy is a hover-crane to go along with the research vehicle. I imagined these guys are part of a terraforming crew."

**WORK SPACE**

"Engineering space on a space freighter. It's another example of the kind of heavy, lived-in, sci-fi that I like to explore."

**BASTARD OF PARIS**

"This was a drawing for a book that never went to print. The idea was dark sci-fi fantasy. I created a Samurai Lord who operates as a magistrate in a futuristic Paris."

**WALKER**

"Yet another Inktober mech. This one's inspired by Metal Gear Solid."

**FRANK**
"This is sketch of a
character for a personal
IP I had developed and
then left behind some
time ago."

66 Another example
of the kind of
heavy, lived-in,
sci-fi that I like
to explore… 99

# Anna Dittmann

This portrait illustrator is always seeking to stay on top of her anatomy game, which is why her sketchbooks are full of life studies

**CARICATURISING**
"I bend and stretch models' features to help me break away from my typical realistic approach."

**UNCONVENTIONAL**
"It can be fun to highlight a model's unique features."

**PERSPECTIVE**
"I often struggle with perspective, and unusual angles can be tricky to tackle."

" I stretch models' features to help me break away from my typical realistic approach "

**COMPILATION SKETCHES**
"I like organising groups of sketches that flow from one figure to the next."

**DETAILED FIGURES**
"Extra time spent with a model can be a relaxing break from loose studies."

> 66 The human figure is capable of tremendous elegance and diversity 99

**POSES**

"When it comes to quick studies, the human figure is capable of tremendous elegance and diversity. I typically spend between two and 15 minutes capturing all of the body's movement."

# Sketchbook

**BACKS**
"Angles that force me away from the model's face make for a refreshing change."

**HAND STUDIES**
"Concentrating on a particular body part can be – ahem – handy, especially areas that you feel could use some improvement."

**LIGHTING**
"I prefer using linear strokes. They enable me to create soft shadows."

**EXPRESSION**
"When indulging in a portrait, I spend much of my time defining the model's facial features."

**Models who interact can be a challenging and rewarding way to synchronise poses**



**ACTION**
"It's not often that two or more models interact, but it can be a challenging and rewarding way to synchronise poses."

# Sketchbook

# Giorgio Baroni

This artist likes nothing more than mixing ideas from the past with futuristic concepts. And if a robot's involved, so much the better!

## Artist PROFILE

**Giorgio Baroni**
LOCATION: Italy

After working for 10 years as a children's book illustrator, Giorgio switched fields and became a character designer for any kind of game: tabletop, cards, miniatures, action figures, video games and even something for the film industry. Some of his client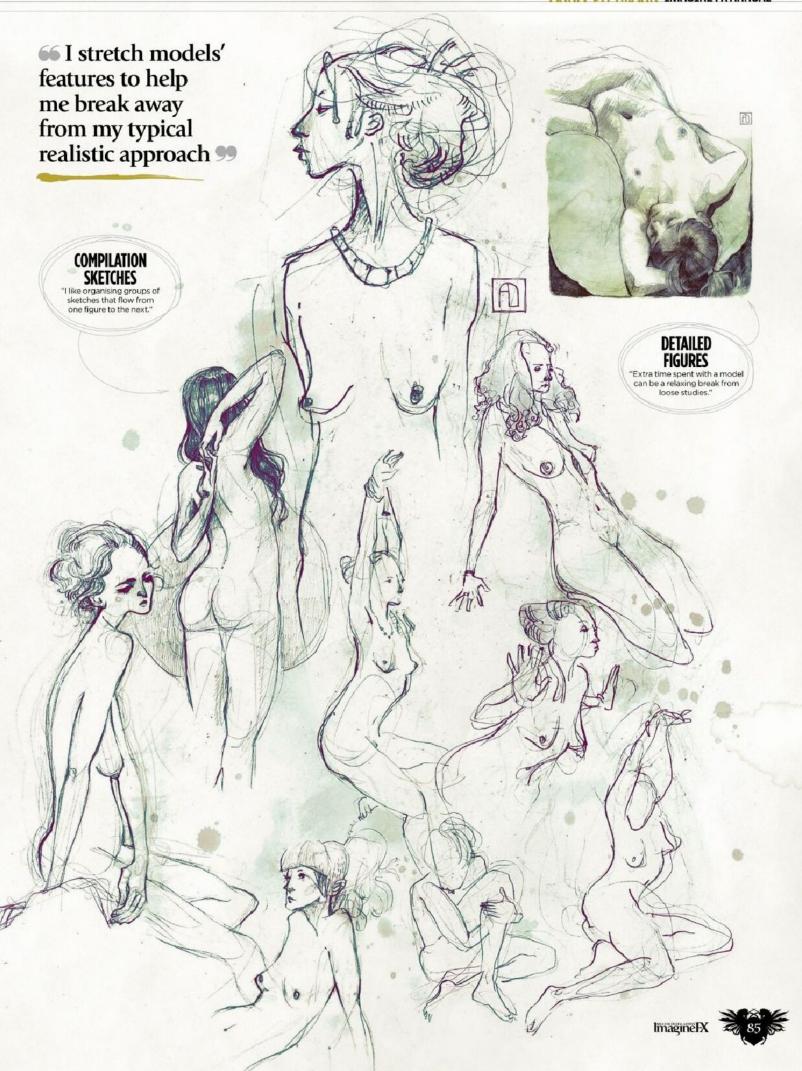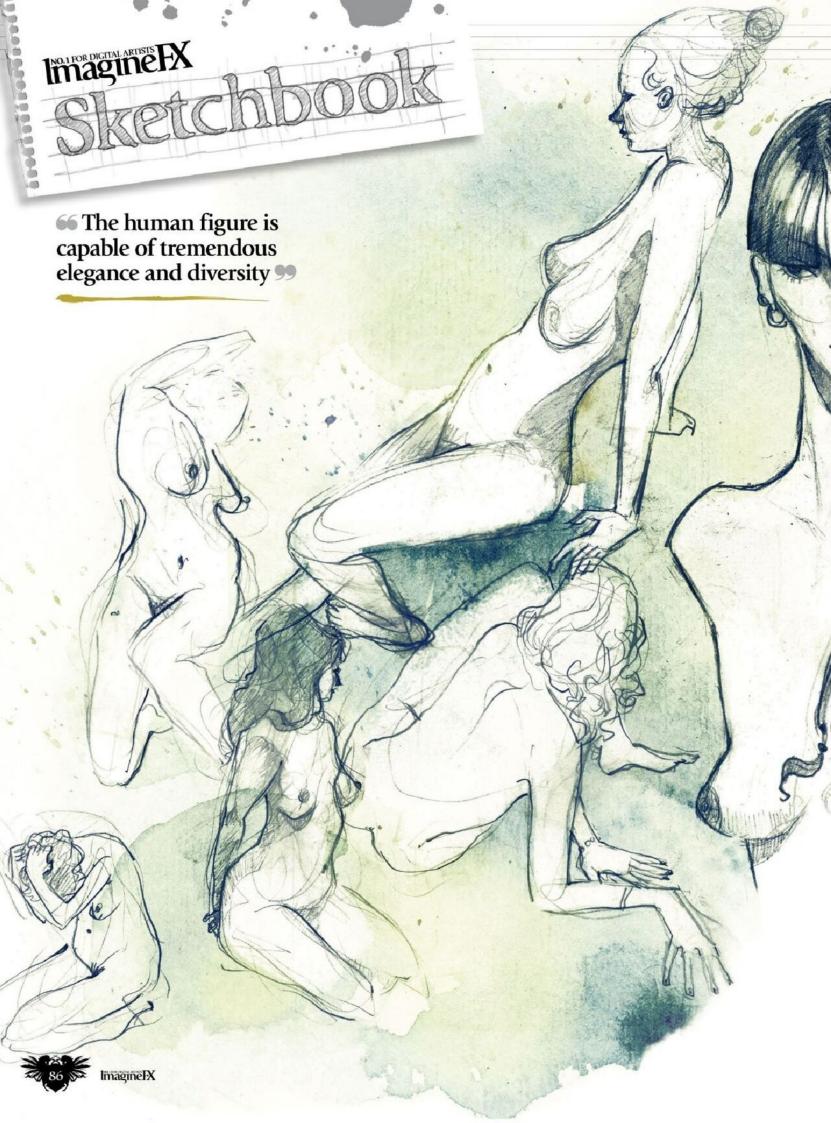s include CMON, Modiphius, Paizo Publishing, John Wick Presents, Sparkypants Studio and Blur Studio. He loves to study objects from the past, and constantly marvels at how differently things were designed just a few decade ago. They inspire him in his sci-fi designs.
www.artstation.com/giorgiobaroni

### WASTELAND WANDERERS

"My sci-fi version of an old tractor – one that was in use almost a century ago. I love taking old machines and their design principles and then thinking what they might look like in the future."

### PRIESTESS

"This is my attempt at mixing fantasy and sci-fi elements. In this Inktober sketch I wanted to become better at line drawing, and limited myself to using only black ink on a white canvas."

### MOR24

"This year I got right into the #MarchofRobots initiative, and had tons of fun designing mechs! This might look like a normal robot, but then you realise that those long limbs are actually arms. Working with silhouettes is like doing the Rorschach test - you can see anything in them."

### GHOST RIDER

"Nothing very original here, but this sketch features two of the things that often inspire me: Spaghetti Westerns and robotics."

> **Working with silhouettes is like doing the Rorschach test**

## MOR15

"Another one for #MarchofRobots. After a lot of anthropomorphic mechas I wanted to try something based on animal anatomy and silhouettes, and this came out."

## ESKORPIO

"This is basically an old Fiat 500 from the 1960s, repurposed as a scout desert vehicle a few years in the future."

## MESSENGER

"I stumbled across a video of these electric unicycles and they really appealed to me. They're the perfect commuting vehicle in a futuristic wasteland."

**SPEEDER**
"Take some old WWII war plane models, glue them together, scale them down and make them rideable like a flying bike!"

❝ I wanted to try something based on animal anatomy and silhouettes… ❞

# Sketchbook

## LONG-RANGE RECONNAISSANCE DRONE 'LURD'

"I love finding new and interesting designs for things, especially with robots and mechs. They can come in any size and shape, and like this one, comes packed with weapons and equipment. Yet it's still able to travel the desert on a single wheel!"

## MOR13

"I'm always been in love with robots since I was a kid, and during the #MarchofRobots challenge I had fun pushing myself and my design skills to the max!"

" After finally seeing Akira I had to design my own cyberpunk bike "

## BOBBER

"After finally seeing Akira I had to design my own cyberpunk bike. So here it is, with a deadly girl riding it."

**MOR19**
"Another mech rolling on a single wheel. I might have a secret love for this mode of transport!"

**MOR22**
"As with many other of my designs in the #MarchofRobots series, I've been hugely inspired by real-life robotic arms and machines. I love to take as much as possible from real life in all of my designs. This helps keep my ideas grounded in reality, while still keeping things enjoyable for the viewer."

**SEARCH AND RESCUE**
"Nothing much than a quick composition sketch, mostly to study dark and light, and how to make them work together."

# Workshops

66 **Create a painting that tells a story** 99



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# Photoshop
# PLAN AND PAINT A STRIKING FIGURE

Learn how **Even Mehl Amundsen** solves lighting and anatomy problems as he paints a female character that's been inspired by tribal elements

*Artist*
**PROFILE**

**Even Mehl Amundsen**
LOCATION: Norway

Even's a freelance concept artist and illustrator based in Oslo. His main fields of work are games and animation, where he creates characters and builds worlds.
http://ifxm.ag/evenma

Doing the course of this workshop I went through some pretty well-established steps from my creative process, which can be applied either to character work or more elaborate illustration work. Indeed, my aim was to focus more on the chosen subject matter than on technique.

However, it turned out to be more of a lesson on why it's so important to spend enough time on planning out your pieces properly, so you don't have to spend your time fixing mistakes later on. A job with even the tightest of deadline is manageable if you put in a basic amount of ground work. So come along and learn some dos and don'ts, and check out where I nearly mucked things up big time!

### 1 Initial character ideas

After I receive the brief and collection of reference material, I work up a very basic sketch. The ImagineFX team has a pretty clear idea of what they want for the piece, so for the technical aspect it's more about making something interesting out of some subtle character nuances. That turn of the head, the crook of the smile, the eye contact. These gestures will eventually play a pretty central role in selling the image.

### 2 Key shapes and tribal elements

I have a good idea of what I want to do with the figure and her pose, so I sketch it out. I focus on the key details and overall shapes that would both work well and enable me to show off some interesting tribal elements. After I send off my sketch, I receive an edit for the angle of the face, but the rest of the details are approved. ➤➤
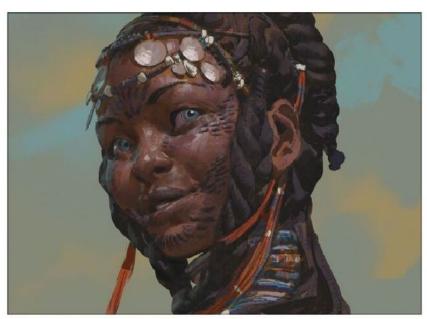
### 3 Sketching reveals a mistake

Using the previous sketches as a base, I combine the elements into a single sketch, and then set to work creating a clean piece of line-art to work from. It's now that I run into my first mistake. At this stage I should have taken a step back and constructed the face properly. Had I done so, I would have seen what would later be revealed as I began to add colour and light. This does happen from time to time, and it comes down to the fact that you can get away with a lot more in a drawing without it becoming problematic, than you can in a painting.



### 4 Starting on the colours

I decide on a simple desaturated background to begin with, choosing to focus on a lot of contrast and colour play on the character. During this point in the process I spend time looking up some references. As well as taking some deep dives on Google and Pinterest, I enjoy leafing through Jimmy Nelson's *Before They Are Gone*. This is a book about tribal societies around the world, and is filled with beautiful photos on each of them.



### 5 Introducing light and shade

Once the colours are established I move on to the lighting and shadows, and in the process run straight into my second mistake. I like to put down my shadows using a Multiply layer: first laying them in very simply and directly, before going over and softening up any edges that need it. I'll usually spend a good amount of time in this stage to make sure I have something I like before moving on, and while I don't rush it here, I should have spent a lot more time working out my details beforehand. Yet I had a somewhat painterly result in mind, and this was my second mistake. I had spent time researching the subject matter, but none on working out the precise execution, and this will come back and bite me in the proverbial ass.



### 6 Fixing the background

When I have all the lighting information established I pop a Normal layer on top of everything and begin to paint for real. At this point, depending on how well I've done in the other steps, I usually get to have a lot of fun rendering out neat little details, pushing and pulling volumes, and designing all the little elements that gives a viewer a reason for a second look. It's during this stage that I decide the background is looking dull, so I try to rectify things with larger brush strokes. I want to leave it abstract, yet use it to help move the eye. However, because I've already established the light on the character, I can't alter the main elements in the background.

### 7 Streamlining my workflow

As I began to find something I can push to a finish, I decide to commit to what I've got so far. So I duplicate all the composite layers that make up the character and combine them separately. This enables me to more easily work with the Smudge and Mixer Brush tools.





### 8 Letting the image rest in my mind

At this point I realise that I've stared at this painting for too long, so I leave it for half a day before coming back to it. And of course, by then I've had just enough time to let my insecurities get to me, and so began to fiddle some more with the background. ➤

**9** **Tackling the values in the scene**
It's at this point that I look for values rather than colours, and began to play with the idea of stormy clouds in the background and cold light from an overcast sky contrasting with the tones of reflected light from the landscape. I work more on the character, too – getting her to a place that's close to her final appearance. Once there I send it in for ImagineFX's final approval before finishing.



**10** **Acting on more feedback**
After the second round of feedback I go to work addressing the team's notes. In general, there was a call for more colour and a brighter background, perhaps something that would read like a sandstorm. I like the idea of that as a palette, although the sandstorm itself might look odd with the character being so formally dressed. I end up getting what I had wanted before, however – a nice, rough, painterly background – and thanks to the art direction this really helps the image.



**11** **Punching up the details by increasing the contrast**
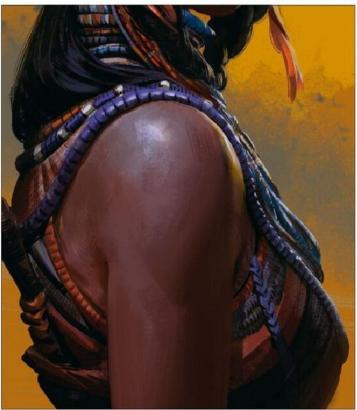The second round of feedback had also done away with her tribal scar patterns, and so I want to leverage the details of the figure in another way, by really pushing the contrast within the figure. Using a Curves adjustment I achieve something I like. Then I begin to do a second round of rendering on top, collapsing all contributing layers down into one for ease of painting.

### 12 Solving lighting issues, and problems with anatomy

As I'm wrapping things up I decide that the contrast between the background and foreground light isn't working for me, so I use a Darken layer to alter the colour of the front light, which sets up a clearer contrast. This is something I should have planned from the start, and could have done a much better job in setting up so that the overall effect would have worked better, but sometimes you just have to improvise. I also have to deal with my sloppy initial drawing when I finally realise that the face is reading too wide. I use the Lasso tool to make the necessary adjustments.

### 13 Finishing touches

One last round of rendering, when I push a few details around and simplify some of the busier parts of the silhouette, and I'm ready to call it done. I add a final Curve adjustment layer to gently move the colours into the blues, to contrast a little more with the background.

### 14 Summing up my process

I'm happy with how the piece has turned out, although the path I took in getting here was less than optimal. Solid planning prevents poor performance and in this case it's proved to be true, if not disastrously so. Spend your time where it matters: the initial stages is where you'll ultimately make or break your image. Check that the fundamentals are solid, that your choices aid the image, and always have a plan that you can refer to. That way you won't freak out too much when you realise you've screwed something up, and you'll always find a way to finish the piece. I hope this workshop has been helpful, and I also hope the fine people at ImagineFX will have me back sometime in the future! ●

## Photoshop
# USE GREYSCALE TO RENDER FIGURES

Discover how **David Ardinaryas Lojaya** is able to create a dynamic character illustration, building it up from a strong greyscale foundation

### Artist PROFILE

**David Ardinaryas Lojaya**
LOCATION: Indonesia

David has been part of the animation industry for over six years, developing character designs. He's worked for Disney TV and DreamWorks TV, and on Jon Bellion's album art.
http://david.lojaya.com

In the animated film industry, visual development artists bring all their ideas to the table, creating imagery needed for the film. Some are quick concept paintings, while others are detailed illustrations. What's important is the storytelling contained within those images. Now there are a thousand ways to realise those ideas, and here I'm going to share one: my process for creating a detailed painting from scratch using a greyscale technique.

To get the most from this workshop you'll need an understanding of visual design, including depicting lighting and shadows, forms, and negative and positive space. Of course, these skills are crucial for any drawing, not just this article. Refining such skills will help you to grow as an artist.

I'll take you through my process for creating a greyscale render and how to control it, so you can add to or edit your artwork. I'll give you tips and tricks for bringing vibrant colours on to a greyscale layer and how to adjust them. All these techniques will help you create a painting that tells a story.



### 1 Brainstorming your ideas

It's crucial to have a vision in your head before you create the painting. Then get that idea down by doing lots of sketches or even some studies. In this case, I do some doodling based on a fun concept about a cyborg and a young engineer who's doing some emergency repairs on him while they're travelling through the air. Unfortunately, she's gradually losing all her tools! The cyborg looks terrified while the girl is enjoying the ride; the contrast in their expressions will 'sell' the scene. I produce two sketches, but I prefer the first one because it has a clear silhouette. ➤➤

### 2 Create a coloured thumbnail

After the sketch has been approved, I create a colour thumbnail to help guide my colour choices. Because I want to create a bright and playful painting in an animated style, I choose fun blues, with hints of pinks, greens and yellows elsewhere. I place an emphasis on the blues and purples.

### 3 Cleaning up and starting anew

Now that I know my direction, it's time to start with a clean line because it's easier for me to render it later on. I create a new layer and start blocking in my characters. I'm using a default Photoshop brush with 100 per cent Opacity and Flow to block my outline.
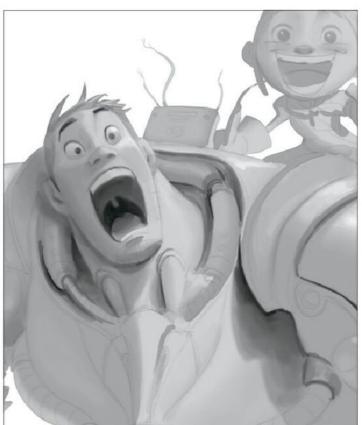
### 4 Generate a greyscale version

I use the Magic Wand to select the outer area of my clean outline, then invert this selection with Ctrl+Shift+I. Now that the inside of the outline is selected, I select a brush and paint everything in grey. Now my greyscale layer is ready to be painted on. I clip my sketch layer to the greyscale layer by holding Alt and clicking in between those two layers in the Layers palette. Then I reduce my line's Opacity to around 10 to 20 per cent, because I won't be needing it.

## 5 Developing a solid lighting foundation

Working on the greyscale layer is the fun part! First, I paint on the shadow area in the new layer, which means I can easily erase into it, if necessary. Because it's a daylight scene set high up in the sky, m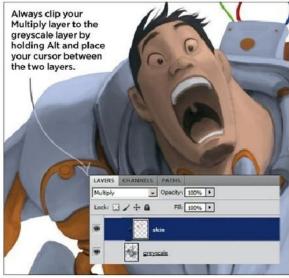y characters need to have strong lighting and shadow contrast on their faces. I take my time during this stage, working to develop a believable lighting and shadow scheme. I recommend using as many layers as you need for this stage. I create three layers of shadow: a hard shadow, a soft shadow, and the effects of ambient occlusion.



Always clip your Multiply layer to the greyscale layer by holding Alt and place your cursor between the two layers.



Select the top lightest colour.

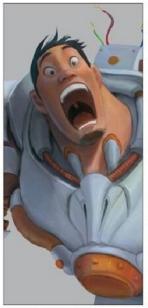## 6 Filling in colours

Colouring the greyscale can be daunting, because the colours initially look bland and flat. The trick is to use the lightest possible colour on a Multiply layer. I like to divide my colours across different layers, such as the skin, hairs and suit. Don't worry about things looking lifeless, because I'm about to give you some cool tips on how to reduce that dull colour look… ➡

### 7 Colour refinements
The trick is to add a variety of colours to each layers. For example, don't just use one reddish colour for the skin layer – add some oranges, yellows, purples and even blues. In real life our skin is composed of a range of colours. I have a custom scatter brush that I use to add the diverse colours. It's very efficient and handy for introducing colours during this step. I'm also adding some blue colours in the shadow area because it's affected by the blue of the sky.



### 8 Bringing in more light
Another trick to add more depth to your coloured greyscale elements is to add light on a Color Dodge layer. I paint with a light yellow brush set to a low Opacity to brighten some parts that are looking too dark, especially on the faces of my characters. Try painting on a new Screen layer to add more depth, too.



### 9 Merge those layers!
Once I'm satisfied with the results, I merge all of my layers. This move might seem a little odd, but it's because I like to work on just one layer. But don't forget to back up the greyscale layer and all those colour layers, because we're going to use them for masking. For instance, if you want to edit the skin, you can go back to the skin layer and press Ctrl while clicking the square box. This will select the area you want to work on. This is the benefit of separating out elements of the composition.



### 10 Repainting stage
Now I start painting on my merged layers. This is because I see the greyscale stage as the foundation for the painting. So this step is where you really get to paint the characters. I mostly repaint the areas of skin: smoothing any areas of uneven render, and bringing more colour depth into the painting.

**11 Paint the background**

I've finished refining my characters, so now it's time to add the background that will reveal the extent of their chaotic flight. I paint some islands and mountain: the natural environment contrasts with the cybernetic technology on show, and strengthens the amount of story telling in the scene.





**12 Details... with no detail**

If there's one composition tip I can give you, it's to draw large shapes with low levels of details. I take this approach with each of my painting: for example, the shapes of the island are rounded and have 'big' shapes, but also feature tiny details. I'm using my custom scatter brush to quickly create this visual interest.



**13 Merge everything with a brush**

After painting the background it can look like my characters are somehow not in their environment. This occurs because of the sharp edges on their outlines. To minimise this effect I select a soft brush that's set on a low Opacity and paint around the edges that I feel are looking too sharp. This is also a chance to apply the colours of the environment to the figures.



**14 Final tweaks and adjustments**
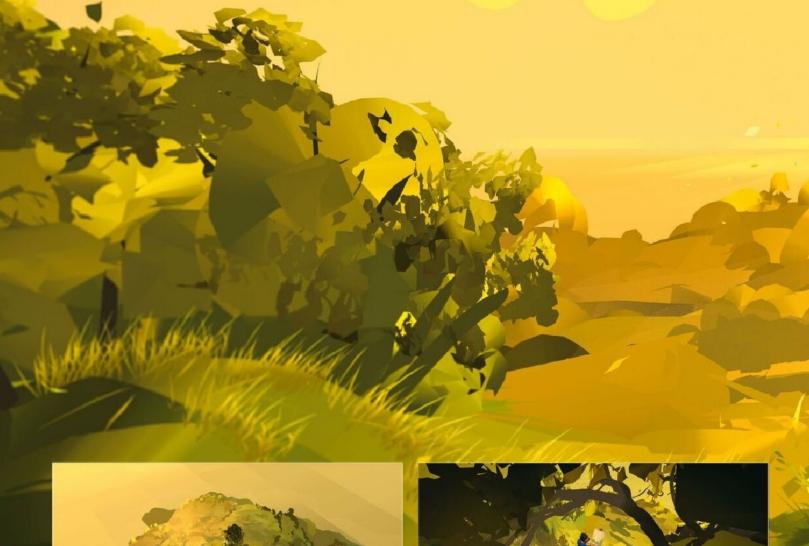
This is the step where you really have to expend a lot of time and energy. Because it's the final adjustments stage, rest your eyes first or ask for another person's opinion on what needs tweaking. You'll definitely find some mistakes at some point – this is your chance to correct them. I use a black and white filter to check on my values. It's also a great way to check on the positive and negative space of the composition. Finally, I call the work done and save the image.

## Quill & Oculus Rift headset

# CREATE A LANDSCAPE IN QUILL AND OCULUS

Wielding the painting and animation tool Quill, **Martin Nebelong** shows how he sketches and develops an immersive landscape composition

## *Artist* PROFILE

**Martin Nebelong**
**LOCATION:** Denmark

Martin is a freelance artist with a long-time interest in technology, and virtual reality in particular. He has more than 15 years of experience working with clients all over the world.
https://ifxm.ag/mar-n

In this workshop I'll be painting a landscape scene in virtual reality with Quill. We'll also have some characters in the scene, a dad and his two kids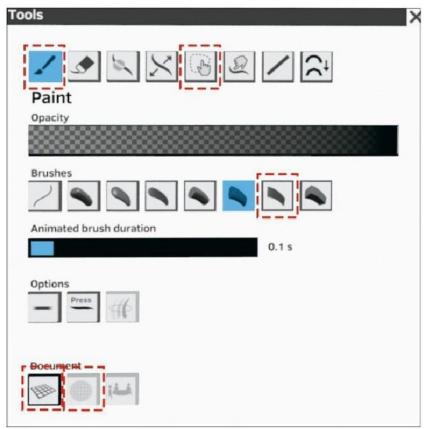 (inspired by my own children) and I'm aiming for a sunset mood. The dad is painting the scenery while his kids are playing.

I've had people ask about the speed of creating a landscape in VR compared to painting a similar scene in Photoshop. You're using the same basic knowledge of colour, composition, line art and so on, so it's easy to compare the two.
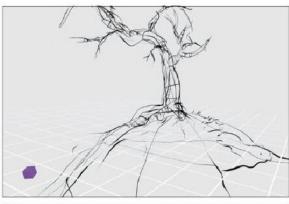
Initially things take a bit longer in VR, but imagine having painted one tree in VR with Quill. That tree can be rotated slightly to look like a new tree; branches and leaves can be rearranged; and parts of the tree can be easily recoloured. In just a few minutes, after having painted that first tree, you can have a forest that won't look it's made up of a single tree that's been copy/pasted.

Now consider painting that same tree in Photoshop and then copy/pasting it. You'd have something that's clearly duplicated versions of the first tree, even if you recolour it, move elements around and so on. And that's without taking into consideration the compositional freedom a 3D scene from Quill gives you. Want to see the world from ant view or bird's view? No problem! ➤→
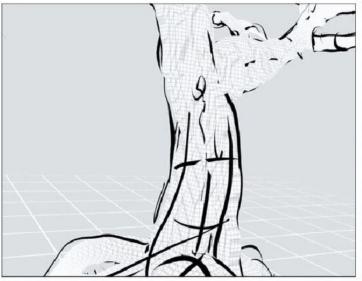
## 1 Set up the software
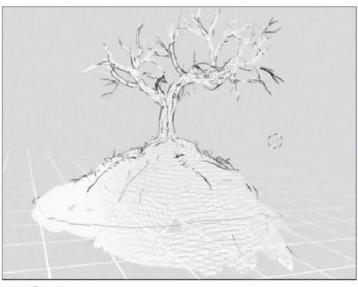
Toggle Brush Grid Helper and Toggle Grid Visibility should both be on. Both will help you position elements in the scene. I mostly use the Ribbon tool and the Selection tool during this early phase. You can toggle quickly between your main tool and the Selection tool by pressing the X button on your left controller (A on the right controller if you're left handed). Once you make a selection, you'll see the Transform Gizmo. You might want to turn this off, unless you need to move your selections more precisely. To do this, just push in on the left thumbstick.

## 2 Sketching phase

I start sketching using the Ribbon tool. I draw in a wireframe-like manner, and constantly turn the drawing in my hands to make sure it looks good from all sides. I use the scene grid as a base for the tree. This ensures that the scene is correctly aligned if I choose to export the scene to another 3D program. To save time, I select a branch and hold down the left trigger and the right grip button (thumb button) while dragging the selection. This is a quick way to make duplicates.
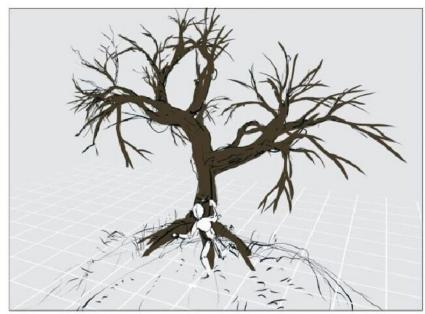




## 3 Colour fill the tree sketch to better visualise the 3D form

To give me a better understanding of the three-dimensional form of the tree, I make a new layer (either through the menu or by pushing up on the right thumbstick), choose the Capped cylinder brush or the Cylinder brush, change the colour to white and fill out the inside of the tree. Just seeing the elements as a see-through wireframe model can become a bit confusing, especially with more complex drawings. I make sure that Pressure Sensitivity is set to On under the Paint options. This ensures I can quickly match the thickness of the inside stroke to the sketch.
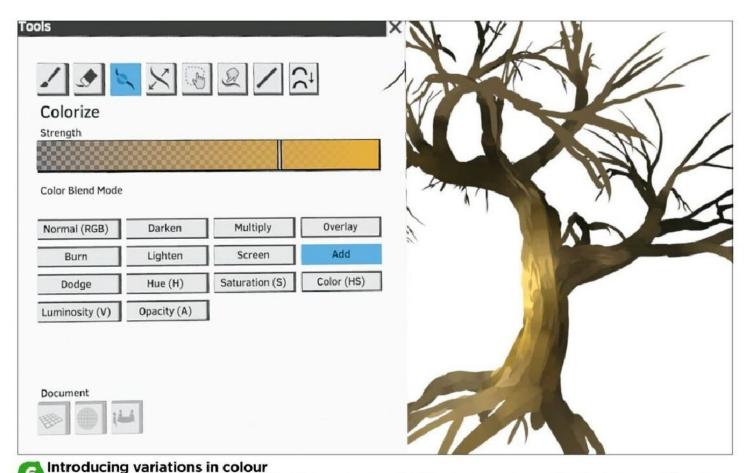
### 4 Sketching the first character

Now I sketch the first character on a new layer. He's a small boy, running with what will be a paper aeroplane in his hand. I move the character around a bit to find a good spot for him, by switching to the Selection tool (X) and making a quick selection of everything. To adjust the selection, I press the right grip button with my active selection, and drag it around.



### 5 Adding basic colour to the tree

I switch to the layer with the white fill of the tree, select the Recolor tool and pick a dark brown for the trunk of the tree. I scale the Recolor tool up by pushing up on the right thumbstick, and quickly recolour the trunk. The Recolor tool can be set to be sensitive to pressure, which I have on most of the time. If you need to recolour only a certain part of your layer, make a selection of that part first before painting.



### 6 Introducing variations in colour

If you're experienced with painting digitally, the Colorize options should feel familiar. Here, I choose Add and paint in some light on the trunk. I also use Multiply in the upper part of the tree, where I know the foliage will occlude the light. The amount and size of the strokes determine how smooth your colours will be. A stroke can only have colour changes along the stroke, not around it. ➤→
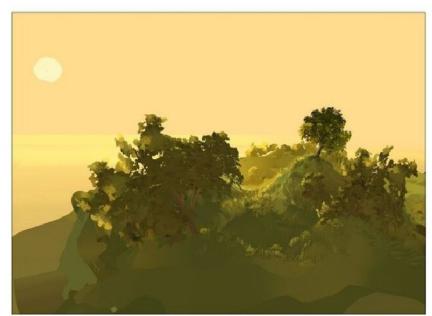
### 7 Rustling up plants and grass

I quickly paint the basic shape of the hilltop using the Ribbon brush. Then I draw some light blades of grass (A). I select those, drag some copies (left trigger+right grip button) (B), then draw a simple weed (C). I combine those **(D)** and finally I duplicate my grass patch all over the hilltop and add colour variation with the Recolor tool (E). This approach is fast and efficient!



### 8 Quickly create a tree canopy

First, I draw some leaves using the Ribbon brush. I rotate my brush while drawing, to make sure the leaf part isn't just a flat surface. I copy this patch a few times and recolour. Then finally I copy that part and make sure to rotate and scale copies for variation. I might even go in with the Nudge tool to add even more variation.



### 9 Establishing the surroundings
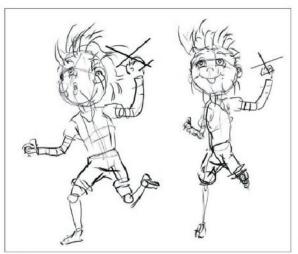
Using the Ribbon tool and the Cabbed cylinder tool, I paint in the landscape. The hilltops and trees close to our main area of focus receive more detail, and I draw in grass and plants using the select/copy method. For the ocean "plate", I draw a line with the Line tool and Ribbon brush flat on the scene grid. I make sure this line aligns to the grid, by rotating it into place using the Transform Gizmo (push in on the left thumbstick). Then I reselect the stroke, move-copy by dragging on the Transform Gizmo, and move the left thumbstick right to repeat the duplication. Repeat until you have a large plane that you can then scale to the right size.
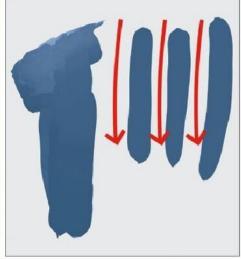


### 10 Sketching in the other characters

Now that I'm happy with the appearance of my hilltop, it's time to sketch in the other characters. I repeat the process I used for the first figure (step four) and make sure to view the drawing from all sides to avoid the characters tilting to one side. I also fill the family members with white to make them stand out from the surroundings. I use the Line tool to depict the easel.
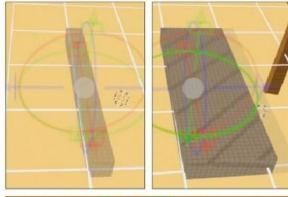
### 11 Refining the character sketches

I start refining the first character, and redraw the initial rough sketch just like I would in a traditional drawing. It's still a bit rough, but I'll do the last polish pass during the colouring phase. Again, it's very important to rotate your drawing throughout your painting process, to avoid creating a slanted drawing. Think of this step as making a wireframe model for your painting.
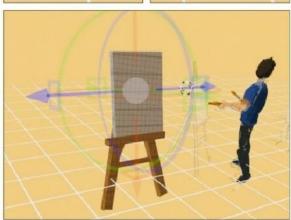


### 12 Colouring the character

Now that the character is drawn to my liking, I start adding colour. I paint flat Ribbon brush strokes on top of the character frame. Remember that the more strokes we have, the more colour detail and smooth gradients we'll be able to achieve. If you know you want a gradient from top to bottom, make your strokes in that direction rather than horizontally. If you draw them horizontally, you won't be able to generate a smooth gradient from top to bottom.



### 13 Refining the easel and painting

For the easel and canvas, which needs more precision than the previous elements, I turn to the scene grid. I draw the legs of the easel and the canvas using the Cube brush and Line tool. I make sure the lines align to the grid, and use the Transform Gizmo to rotate them into place. I go in and add lights to the sides and back using the Ribbon brush, Line tool and a lighter colour.



### 14 Painting in the other characters

I paint in the two other characters using the same approach as for the boy. The Selection tool makes it straightforward to repose the characters if necessary. For those two characters, I mostly use the Cabbed Cylinder brush. It's slightly more demanding on system performance compared to the Ribbon brush, but you don't have to be as careful to avoid "holes" between your brushstrokes. Happy Quilling! •

## Artist insight
# CREATE INTRIGUE IN YOUR WORK

**Ann Maulina** draws and colours promotional art for her own webcomic, which contains a teaser for the tale that lies ahead...

Raruurien is my ongoing original webcomic. The story is about Rien, a recently widowed witch who lives with her two sons in a traditional mountain village.

Because of my decision to introduce a young, beautiful widow character early in the story, I get many questions from the comic's readers. Who was the husband? Is he handsome? How did he die? I try not to reveal any spoilers related to him. But sometimes I tease the readers by featuring him in flashback panels without showing his face.

In this promo art, I'm drawing Rien's most beautiful memory of her late husband, which is their wedding scene. Again, I tease the reader by obscuring his face. ➤➤

# PAINTING WEDDED BLISS

### Framing the scene and guiding the eye
I use the flag arrangement in this image to guide the viewer's eyes. The lines and wind direction flow across the image, which prevent the viewer from exiting the image, and focuses their attention on one area: the title logo.

### Create a painterly background
I adopt a painterly drawing style for the background, using a Soft square brush for the flags and a water ink brush for the cloud. By using solid colours on the characters and painterly colours on the background I create a depth of field effect. The further an object is from a figure, the more painterly it becomes.

## Reflected light for different materials

There are three levels of reflected light in this image. A metallic surface generates hard reflected lights with strong colours. Silk creates soft-edged reflected light with strong colours. Blurry, soft reflections are generated by light hitting regular fabric.

## The story behind the tribal designs

There's a bit of subtle storytelling going on here. A wedding is the joining of two families. So I create different tribal symbols that represent each family. The symmetrical, insect-like designs are from the bride's clan, while the solid triangle shapes are from the groom's family.

# How I develop...
# COLOURS THAT WARM UP THE COMPOSITION

**1 Have fun with sketch designs**
In this wedding scene I want to bring the most out of Rien's beautiful ethnic wedding dress. So I begin the process by producing a range of sketches that show off the design of her outfit.

**2 Develop a colour composition**
I pick a triad colour scheme and block the main objects with colours that determine the temperature of the scene. Adding more colours to the palette is key: it helps me visualise a rough version of the final image.

**3 Adding detail to the colour sketch**

Once I have the colour composition locked in place, the rest of the process is just detailing and finishing. I start by applying base colours, shading, reflected lights and highlights.

## Clip Studio Paint & Photoshop
# CAPTURE THE FEEL OF THE ROAD

**Dave Kendall** steps onto Cormac McCarthy's Road to illustrate a moment of trepidation and paranoia from this dark, dystopian novel

**Artist PROFILE**

**Dave Kendall**
**LOCATION:** England

Dave's a fantasy and horror illustrator, and created the art for 2000 AD's Fall of Deadworld.
http://ifxm.ag/d-kendall

I was drawn to Cormac McCarthy's work via the incredible, horrific and surreal western, Blood Meridian. It's a book I'd love to illustrate but its savagery would probably be too much for the newsstand. I instead, plumped for his brighter, more cheerful novella, The Road.

Joking aside, this is another book full of formidable imagery and situations. I started rereading the first couple of pages in preparation and was drawn to the description of father and son, a motorcycle mirror attached to the shopping trolley, containing all their worldly goods. It was a means to keep an eye out for strangers and dangers on the road behind. I want to use this workshop to capture the feelings and emotions the characters are facing during day-to-day survival. A general image, with an emphasis on character, rather than a specific scene.

I'll first be taking you through the important sketchbook process where I spend time trying to capture the feel of the characters before starting the final image. For me, the sketching process is the most important and entertaining aspect of an illustration. Its rough edges and half-formed imagery are the inner visuals I usually get when reading a book.

The second part will detail the process of shaping those images into a more refined final image.



### 1 Exploring the sketchbook
For me, everything starts in the sketch book. I let the pencil wander, and don't worry about the finish or whether I'm drawing accurately. I sometimes find that the rougher little doodles will provide me with an angle that more refined sketches miss. I think it's down to their slightly more abstract and chaotic nature.

### 2 Warming up
I've taken to drawing straight in with ink and brush pens. I find that not being able to erase is a great focusing exercise. However, for this stage I just use the brush pens for the initial concept idea. I had the idea that we see the father and son looking back at an unseen threat, which is only visible in the shopping cart mirror. No real details – just a hint of shapes and composition. ➤➤

### 3 Focusing in on a father and his son

From the initial pen brush sketch I decide to focus right in on the two characters. Making it a portrait shot. I also make sure the mirror and its hint of threat is more obvious and part of the composition and the story I'm trying to tell. I block these concepts in with solid graphite lead pencils. I can be very direct and suggestive without breaking the lead.

### 4 The characters who we meet

I finally focus in on the faces of father and son. After all, they're going to be the most important part of the image. I did a sketch of a guy waiting by a bus stop with a cap and hood combination, and decided to give that to the boy. I felt the father would have had his hearing and sightline as free as possible in this dangerous world. It's what I do when I take my boys to school.



### 5 Jump into Clip Studio Paint

Using Clip Studio Paint I convert my sketches into a rough approximation and composition. I redraw much of these images but at this point they're place holders for the next stage. I draw out the final image with a simple textured pencil. I find the program very intuitive to use.

### 6 Taking a sepia view

I go into Photoshop. I like my pencils to have a warm sepia feel, so I create an Overlay layer and fill it with a colour close to Burnt sienna. I think this works well with fleshtones, however dirty and grimy they're going to be. I also keep the looseness and roughness of the initial pencils. I don't really want them to be too clean where this image is concerned.

### 7 Establishing values

I apply a gradient of black to white on a Multiply layer underneath the locked pencil layer. I do this a couple of times in order to create a rough focal point of light and dark. I then paint, using a basic brush, the mid-tones highlights and shadows. The gradient will have done much of the work, but I'm refining it at this stage.

### 8 Adding some colour and experimenting with layer modes

Working underneath the pencil layer, I create a new layer and set it to Color Blend. Then I apply colour using a wide Soft brush. I keep in mind the washed-out feel described in the book, and keep the colour subtle and understated. I experiment with different layers. I find Color Burn can be very effective on low Transparency. It's a case of gently tweaking it until I have the desired mood. ➤➤

### 9 It's in the trees

After flattening the pencils, value and colour layers I start working on the background. The trees in the novel are devoid of leaves, and are blackened and drained of life. I don't need to be too detailed and they would work better with hints of their condition. Overall, I want to create the atmosphere. It's what McCarthy does so well. I use simple Rounds and shaped brushes to depict them.



### 10 Getting into Father's mindset

I start building up the father with blocky brush marks. I continue to refine and model the drawing as I paint, trying to read what the father would be feeling. Because I mainly draw comics, I'm continually thinking about my characters as I work. It's as much about emotional content as technique.
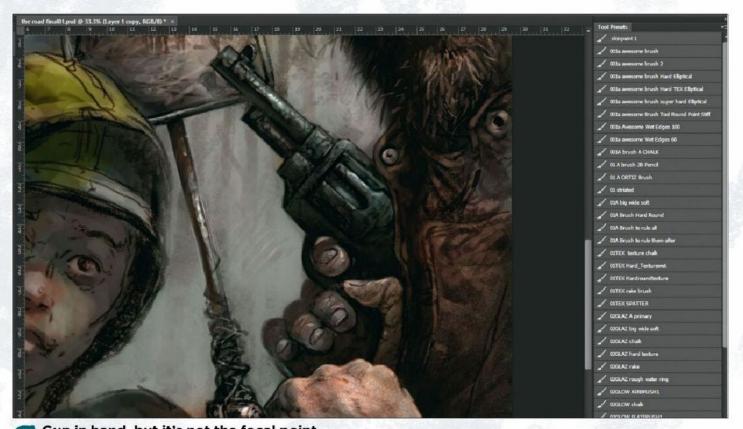
### 11 Dirt and grime, inspired by real-life references

I'm a huge fan of documentary photographers. I have a collection of photographs of homeless people, and refer to some of these as I paint. In the details I try to capture the texture of skin that's been exposed to the elements. The father is also slowly dying so I want to capture that deterioration. I define winkles and blemishes with my fine Ellipse brush.

### 12 Gun in hand, but it's not the focal point

I make my way down the image, rendering the clothing, hands and gun. I work in the same way of building up the larger elements and then refining with details and highlights. I use a spatter texture to add noise and texture to the hands, leaving the highlights till last. The hand holding the gun is a little less defined because I want the hand holding the trolley to draw the viewer's eye along the handle to the boy.



### 13 Picturing the boy

I approach the boy in a similar way to his father. However, I don't need him to be as detailed. The more lines and texture you give, the older a face tends to look. I try to ensure that the theme of grime is carried forward, and make his eyes stand out from the shadow cast from his cap. He's a little more scared than his father.



### 14 Final push with last-minute experimentations

The image is nearing completion. I tend to play with colour balances at this stage. I never permanently change the final image and instead use adjustment layers or separate colour overlays. I experiment with blend modes and Opacity to refine the colour. There are many tools that can refine your overlays. Layer masks are useful because you can use the painting brushes to cleanly modify your artwork.

# Traditional media & Photoshop
# DRAWING & INKING WITH CONFIDENCE

**Andrew Mar** takes you through his creative process from initial roughs to the final inking steps, as he uses pen and inks to create a moody warrior

## Artist PROFILE

**Andrew Mar**
LOCATION: US

Andrew began taking lessons in Chinese calligraphy at the age of five and studied it through high school before starting college. This, in part, explains his confidence in working with the medium of ink.
www.andrewkmar.com

Ink is my passion. I love its unforgiving nature and its demand for attention against the blank page. Ink is black, paper is white. Yet even on opposite sides of the spectrum, these two can work together to create something soft, subtle and delicate.

Since working at game studios, I've forgotten most traditional mediums, but ink always calls back to me. After a day of staring into monitors, I want nothing more than to sit down with my sketchbook without an undo button to have my back.

I believe any artist looking to create fantastic and mythical characters and environments grounded in reality should put in the hours to study from life. Figure-drawing workshops, using friends and family as models or the park down the street are all perfect to study from. The constant sponging of information, no matter how seemingly insignificant or unconscious, adds to your ever-growing visual library.

As I work pretty organically, there will be no grids, no measurements, to perfectly scale from loose pencil scribbles to a tight finished drawing.

I let the drawings breathe a bit. They inform me as much as I guide them. If he wants to shift his weight to one leg a bit, I'll shift his shoulder to compensate. For a medium as permanent as ink, I find it helps to not get too married to the pencil drawing. Instead, I set important landmarks, lock down a strong gesture, and dial in on things I'm not as confident in, such as fingers and legs. Once I'm hopeful that the final piece could be cool, I switch out the pencil for the pen and hope for the best. And if it falls short, well… it's only ink and paper.

## WORKSHOP MATERIALS

**PAPER**
For this piece I'm using Strathmore 9x12 Bristol, but I usually carry around a Moleskine sketchbook for drawing on the go.

**PENS**
A variety of Pilot Hi-Tec-C ink pens in different sizes and colours. I also use a Molotow white paint pen.

**BRUSH PENS**
I use a variety of Pentel brush pens in different sizes and colours.
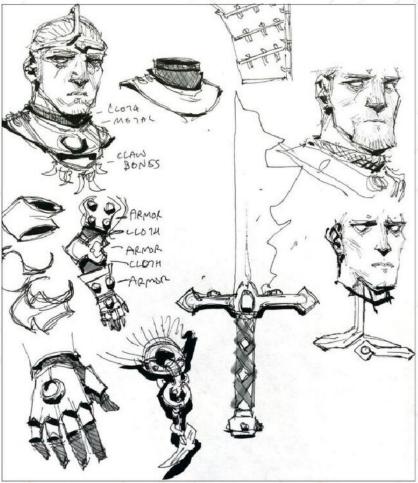
### 1 Create loose thumbnails
When doing thumbnails, I'm never too concerned with anatomy or costumes. I aim for a gesture, a stance, a feeling. I keep these vague as things will inevitably shift and change a bit as I go along. I like to use a thick brush pen to see how shadows might fall into place for the final.

### 2 Draw a tighter thumbnail
Since the first thumbnails are so vague, I want to have a better idea of what I want the final piece to be, so I expand on it while keeping it small. Here, I can start to think about what the face and armour could look like, all without being forced to lock anything down. ➤➤

### 3 Dressing and costuming ideas

I make notes to myself separately so things don't get too muddled. I jot down details I want to include, such as a claw necklace and tassels on his cape, identifying scars… anything to make him feel more like an individual. These mostly solidify my final thoughts so I don't spend too much time erasing on my final paper.

### 4 Produce a pencil sketch

From the thumbnail I start sketching out the final image on my Bristol with a 2H pencil so that the image remains light for best inking conditions. Here, I'm just making sure all the major elements are in the correct position before I start narrowing in on details.

### 5 Introduce focal points

I want to focus on the face, hands and sword so I'll spend a little more time clearing those up for myself. I like to keep the rest of the pencils as loose as possible to preserve a little spontaneous energy as I start to ink.

### 6 Anatomy under the armour

I step back and give the final image a look over to check my proportions. I take into account his muscle structure underneath the armour to make sure everything is believable. I have to make small adjustments to give him the bulk I want him to feel.

### 7 Facial expression

Since the face is naturally the most important focal point, I spend most of my time getting it before I start lining. He's a warrior prince; he should look a little worn and weary, while retaining a regal feel. If I have to, I'll pull up portrait reference to make sure it looks just right.

### 8 Plan for the shadows

The last step before I make irreparable changes in ink is to plan out where I want to add shadows using Xs for solid blacks. I take into consideration where I want to lead the eye, so creating a lot of contrast around my focal points – the face, hands, the sword – is in my best interest.

### 9 Lining with ink

Take a shot of whiskey, because there's no second guessing yourself here. If something can be done with one stroke, never use two. Too often I see an artist who's new to ink use 10 with what can be accomplished with one. Practise the route in the air above your art, and then execute perfectly.
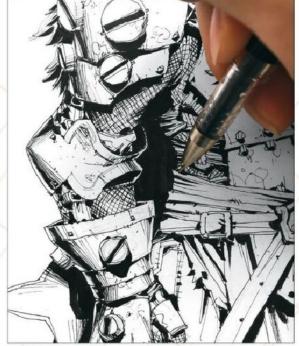
### 10 Adding clarity to the materials on the character

I have a few different materials I want to convey here, such as fur, metal and cloth. All of these can be distilled down with specific details. Fur can be shown through large clumps and individual strands, metal with nicks and dents, and cloth with weave patterns.

### 11 Spotting blacks

With the Pentel brush pen, I start filling in large spots and hitting small dabs of ink in areas that I identify won't receive light in a manner similar to ambient occlusion on a 3D model. These shadows start to give weight and dimension to the character, and help pop him out.

### 12 Blending and hatching

Cast shadows can remain harsh, but form shadows need to be softened, so I go back to the Hi-Tec-C and start hatching. I use my whole gamut of pens ranging from 0.25 to 0.4, and grey to achieve my desired level of smoothness between the brush pen and the thinner ink lines.
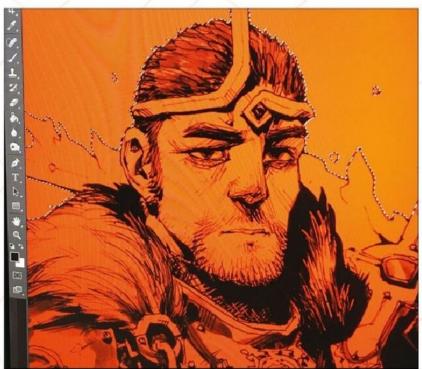
### 13 Introducing white to the image
With the Molotow white paint pen, I can pick out details from spots previously covered in black such as stray hairs. I use this sparingly to keep the surface of the piece as clean as I can get, while also providing a nice, finished look. I can also use the pen to fix minor accidents.



### 14 Bringing in a grey tone
The theory behind the use of my grey wash is to reinforce my focal points and materials, namely anything reflective such as polished metal. The absence of the wash in this case leaves behind the blank white page, picking out a highlight and effectively communicating what the armour is made of.



### 15 Finishing the painting in Photoshop
After scanning, I make a few minor tweaks in Photoshop and mask out the character from the negative space using the Magic Wand tool. I contract the selection by a few pixels and fill it with white, and on a separate layer, fill the background with a bold red to finish it off.

# Maya
# RAPID POSING SKILLS IN MAYA

**Bader Badruddin** encourages you to stop over-analysing your character animation work and try to get a pose done in as little time as possible!

*Artist*
**PROFILE**

**Bader
Badruddin**
LOCATION: England

Bader's a character
animator who's worked
for Disney, Nickelodeon
and Cartoon Network,
applying his 2D and 3D
animation, storyboarding
and character design
skills. He's also the co-
founder of AnimDojo.
**www.animdojo.com**

I've been a lead and director for the past couple of years and have worked with many animators, helping them hone their skills to become faster and more efficient.

Initially, I found that the animators were taking too long fiddling with their keys in the graph editor, trying to fix a fundamentally flawed animation. The best thing to do was to start again with a new foundation for them to follow.

So we thought it would be best to put these steps into an easy-to-follow list. This has developed into the foundations of AnimDojo's approach to animating.

There are many things I can cover here, but I want to share with you something practical so you can get a sense of how our approach is different. This is an exercise that's recommended to be done at least half an hour before animating, just like a warm-up exercise. Doing so will help you to build muscle memory,

enabling you to break free from viewing the computer or Maya as an obstacle. Instead, you'll embrace it as part of your time and work effortlessly. In time this will free you to focus on posing and animating without feeling "slow or stuck".
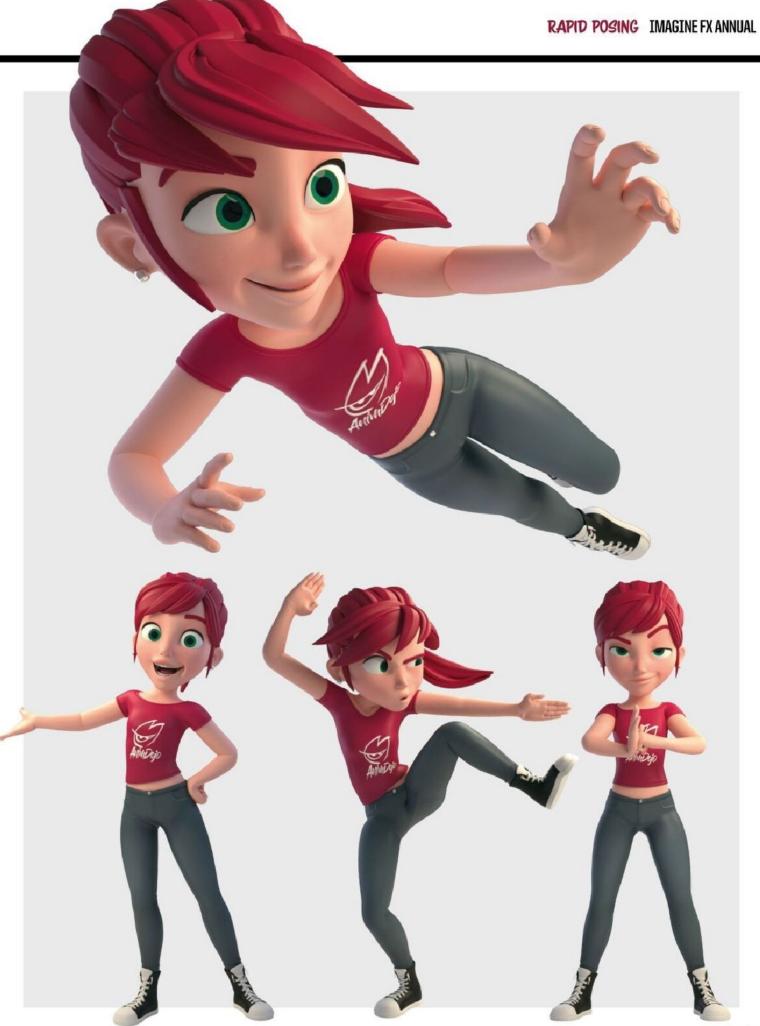
You'll have five minutes per pose, and you can use the rig provided with this workshop and follow along in one of our pre-recorded live sessions. However, before you do that you need to follow a few simple steps to know how to do it correctly…



## 1 Configuring the Viewport in Maya

One of the things that helped me improve my speed and efficiency in Maya was when I used the three-port view instead of having dual monitors. On the left would be my perspective (A), on the right my camera view (B), and below is the graph editor (C). The reason for this is so I don't keep turning my head between two screens, constantly checking both for every step I make. I work 90 per cent of the time directly in the camera view, and only use perspective if I can't get the pose to work because of awkward positioning of body parts to the camera. ➤➤

### 2 Let's middle mouse it!

This is a term I use a lot with my animators. I've seen so many people control the rig by selecting the actual manipulators and moving them axis by axis. This is such a time waster! Grab the character's arm, then anywhere on the screen just use your middle mouse button and drag it wherever you need it to be. This is much faster, and over time you'll see the benefits of this approach. Note that this is only possible with translation, not rotation.
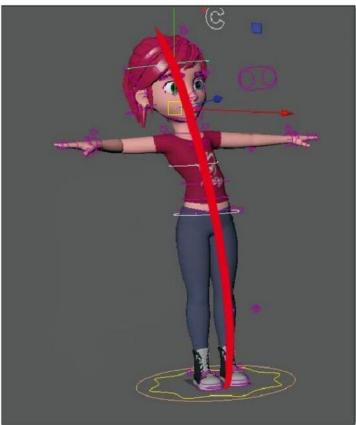
### 3 Less is definitely more

The idea that the more complex a rig is the better it'll perform, is a pet peeve of mine. Keep things simple. Set your arms to IK mode and set their space to either hips or chest. That way, when you move the hips the entire upper body moves along with it. You want to be able to move the character with as few controllers as possible.





### 4 Quickly assess your line of action

The amount of time wasted when posing a character sometimes boils down to one little thing animators forget about, and that's the line of action. Grab the hips, the chest and the head if need be, and together move them into position. This will give you a quick glance at what your line of action will look like, without spending a long time moving each body part – only to realise you haven't pushed the pose enough.

### 5 It's all in the hips

Once you've posed your line of action, you'll notice that your character looks a little wonky. But that's okay, because now it's time to fix the pose to work with our line of action. Don't bother with the chest or head, and completely ignore the arms at this stage. Your focus should be on the hips. If you've set up your rig to work from the hips up like we did in step two, then moving the hips moves the entire upper body. This is also a good time to pose the legs to work with the hips.



### 6 Go through the spine upwards

Now that our hips are in place, it's time to adjust the chest and head to fit perfectly into our line of action. Don't forget to tilt the shoulders in such a way that it's in balance with the hips. I always keep an eye out for twinning (when both sides of the body are mirrored) and this is a simple way to fix that.



### 7 Work the face early on

One thing that I regularly notice with animators is they tend to leave the face until the very end. This usually results in the face feeling detached from the body as it moves. A good way to get into the habit of always posing the face with the body is by following this workshop. Don't ignore things and say to yourself, "I'll get to that when I polish my animation." The face needs to be posed from the very first blocking stage.



### 8 The hands need attention, too

I often get asked how I pose my hands so quickly, and the answer is very simple. I select all the controllers at once, so when I rotate they all rotate together. It's taken me some time to get used to doing it, but once you work this way you won't want to go back to your old ways of posing. ➨

### 9  Soften the edges of the character's limbs

In general, for cartoon animation I always prefer to soften the edges of elbows and knees. It gives it a softer more appealing look. Don't go overboard though, otherwise you'll end up with a "rubber hose" style (unless that's the look you're going for). It's a balancing act and I always push my animators and students to work this into their initial blocking.



### 10  Do you have more time?

Now this step relates specifically to our AnimDojo workshop. If you find that you still have time to work on the pose before the five minutes are up, be careful not to over-analyse and end up ruining the pose you came up with. There's a creative freedom that you generate from the first "gesture" pose you made, and you don't want to lose that. I'd recommend focusing on pushing the details. Work more on the limbs, the face – even the character's hair could add to the pose.



### 11  Go one way or the other

I always get asked about acting and how to decide what pose to put the character in. The tricky part is how to do this in just five minutes! The way I look at posing a character is by simply going one way or the other. For example, if I were to pose the character as "surprised" I can either draw my line of action going away, or towards the viewer. There are many other ways of course, but I like to keep things simple. If I'm posing a character moving as they talk, pose one would be one way and pose two would be in the opposite direction.

### 12 It's all about developing contrast

One of the problems I used to experience early in my career was getting my animation to look cartoon-like. I've realised over the years that the reason I wasn't getting those results was mainly down to me not putting enough contrast between my poses. Don't just go for 50 per cent of what the pose could be – push beyond and exaggerate it. Don't be afraid to "break" the rig – in other words, pushing it beyond its limits. As long as what's broken is hidden from the camera view, it doesn't matter.



### 13 Compiling an acting library

One of the best ways to learn how to pose is to build a library of acting choices in your head. I love going to the park just to observe and study people. I keep a mental note of what I see and try to add it to my work. I also try to act and feel things out, to know which muscles to pull or where the weight is in my poses. This takes time, but in the long run you'll be able to pull a pose out of your head whenever you need it!

## Photoshop
# BE INSPIRED BY A MANGA CLASSIC

**Toni Infante** taps into the influence of Akira, and uses colour, contrast and composition to create a striking cover image

### Artist PROFILE

**Toni Infante**
LOCATION: Spain

A freelance illustrator and comic artist from Barcelona, Toni works with clients such as Image Comics, Boom! and DC. He also teaches.
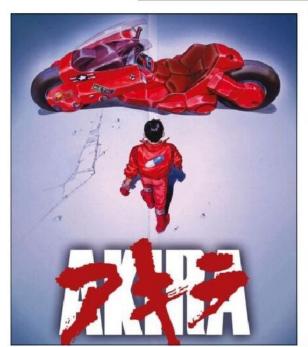www.toniinfante.com

I've been a huge manga fan since childhood and it's impossible to hide the influence that passion has on my art. In my quest to learn how to paint powerful and dynamic images, I've learned a lot from my favourite manga artists through observation, and trial and error.

Yet as illustrators we can also make use of a range of visual techniques – composition, colour, lighting, perspective – to help us achieve such goals. People rarely spend more than a few seconds looking at something before moving on. So in the case of art that also serves a commercial purpose it's even more important to ensure those techniques are all working to create an eye-catching composition. It may feel overwhelming at times, but the trick is divide up the workflow, focus on one step at a time and solve any problems as they arise.

Because it's a static medium, I always try to create dynamism by playing with and exaggerating these techniques. Use of complementary colours, diagonal shapes and forced perspectives are some of the elements I repeatedly use in my work and I'll talk about these and more in this workshop. From the initial rough sketches, creating more detailed line art, adding colour and final touches, I'll dive into this neon world to explain you my choices during the process and pass on some tips or observations that hopefully will help you in your own work.





### 1 Looking for inspiration
Before I begin sketching I always look around for some reference material. Films, photographs or any other media can help me to generate a raft of original ideas. I'm always trying to make something fresh and different in my art. Having said that, this piece is meant to be a tribute to the manga classic Akira, but I'll also include references to some of my other favourite manga series.

### 2 Produce quick thumbnails
While the premise is simple – a woman on a motorbike – there's plenty of potential for introducing different points of view. Those sketches work as a brainstorming session, and as well as arranging elements differently I try to work with different emotions on each one, too. Black, white and a mid-tone are all the colours I need at this point, which make things simple yet readable. Those sketches are like the skeleton of the image, and the composition must work even at this early stage. I place my lighting and cast shadows with the narrative in mind, and if I'm lucky I'll start having some ideas for how to colour the scene later on. ➤➤
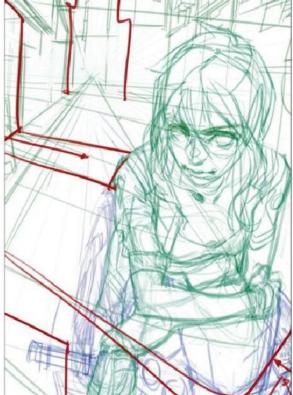
### 3 Refining the sketch
It's time to draw over the sketch and place details, just as if I were using a lightbox. I focus on anatomy and perspective, using a one-point perspective grid that I rotate slightly to add some dynamism to the scene. Then I define muscles and the main lines of the character. I draw her clothes, hair and other details in a different colour, so as not to lose sight of the character's anatomy.

### 4 Background and balance
Placing the character on the right can make the image look unbalanced. To fix this I place details in the street behind using some night Japanese street images as reference. I place a huge light source on the store at the left, which creates a key diagonal line going towards the character. The vertical street lines and the motorbike headlight help to balance out the overall composition.
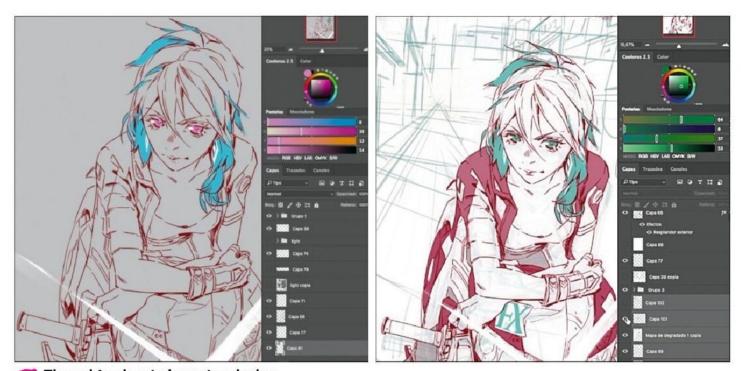
### 5 Final line art
When everything's set in place I draw over the rough sketches lines from before and detail the character and other elements. The background will be detailed using only colour, but line art will remain visible on the character and foreground, so I keep them clean on different layers. This line art will play a huge role in depicting the classic manga look.

### 6 Don't overwork, simplify
Sometimes it's tempting to start detailing early on in the process. The results are often messy. Instead, try to be straightforward and simplify. Here, the basic structure and anatomy are in place, but it doesn't mean they need to be visible on the line art. The structure lines have done their job and now it's time to build on them. I simplify objects like her nose and hands into just a few lines.
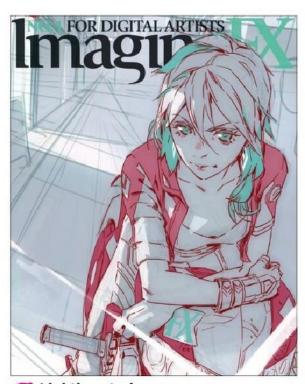
### 7 Thoughts about character design

On a portrait piece like this it's important to define the character. The clothing design, colour scheme and eyes all help to add depth to our young biker. I decide to portray her wearing a leather jacket and trousers with plenty of triangles motifs and diagonals. You can also see these shapes in her hair. Red-coloured elements on her clothes and face convey the impression of strength, despite her friendly expression.



### 8 Lighting study

The idea of setting the scene on a neon-lit street at night was decided early on, but now it's necessary to detail the concept and place highlights and shadows more precisely. I pay attention to the position of the ImagineFX logo, too – it's important to keep it readable. I decide to leave that area in dark tones and free from neon lights, enabling the logo to pop out in white.

### 9 Establishing general colour schemes

I now make my first colour decisions. Depending on the complexity of the illustration, I usually create a full colour key in a smaller duplicate of the file. However, because there's just one big character and I've got a clear idea of the image I don't need more than my previous light and tone study. Filters like Image> Adjustment>Color balance help me to keep all the tones as a purple hue. ➤➤

**10** **Bringing life to the world**
To add realism and life I bring plenty of details into the background: store signs, damp pavements, people… I imagine myself in the scene and try to express on the canvas what I would feel as I walk through that environment. Exaggerated lighting or a sense of weather are always good tools to employ when creating visual interest.
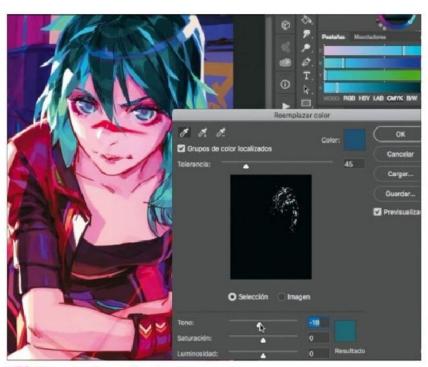
### 11 Volume and rendering

Using my custom Colour Generator brush in Overlay mode I add some randomness to my colours. This helps to enrich the entire image. Then I start on the character. First I put highlight over on the left that will make her stand out, and then I dive into the details. My shading is full of hard edges and flat colours, because I want the image to echo the anime or manga style.

### 12 Leather and metal

My colours are already established so I select the Eyedropper tool (Alt+click) and keep working on shades and volumes, bearing in mind that lighting works differently across a range of surfaces. The darkest zones and contrast are reserved for leather and metal, while skin is worked with a low contrast. I try to merge layers while painting, keeping the background and lights separate from the character.

### 13 Bring in anime-style effects

I'm almost there now, so I enhance the overall look and apply my final touches. Inspired by anime I spend a bit of time working up the motorbike headlights, making them big and strong. These geometric forms also help me to fill the composition to the lower-right area of the scene. They're painted with white with some reddish tones on the edges on an Overlay layer mode.

### 14 Tweaks from the team

At the request of the ImagineFX team, I change the hair colour and light focus to make the character stand out against the logo. I also do some polishing work and get rid of some details on the background to make the cover text more readable. At any point, it's important to stay focused on the important stuff and not fill everything with unnecessary details that might distract the viewer. To finish off, I apply Filter>Focus>Focus mask to emphasise certain shapes in the scene. ✿

# Traditional

# FXPosé
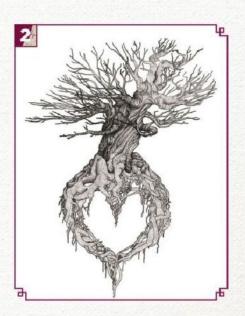
## SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



## Edward Dillon

**LOCATION:** England  **MEDIA:** Fineliner, dip pens  **WEB:** www.instagram.com/epdillon

Edward uses an ink stippling technique in his art. "It gives a unique intimacy to detailing, which can be both maddening and addictively compelling," he says.



**1 THE CAT, THE MASK, HIS MIND AND THEIR TROUBLE**
"I used to have quite long and horrible dreams. This drawing started as an unplanned, automatic drawing. I got carried away and started to ink it with a dip pen."

**2 TREE**
"This poster was commissioned to advertise a play called Into The Woods, which showed at The Cockpit in London earlier this year."

**3 INSIDE OUT**
"My inner demons. I've been plagued by depression, among other things, for most of my adult life; wrapped in its loving embrace."

**Want to submit your work? Visit** http://ifxm.ag/getinifx

ImagineFX

# Sarah Mason

**LOCATION:** England   **MEDIA:** Pencil, ink, watercolour   **WEB:** www.artbysarahmason.com

"My work blends strong traditional techniques with contemporary themes, gravitas and whimsy, lines and colours, and themes of flora and fauna," says Sarah, a freelance artist based on the south coast of England.



**1 NOOR**
"Noor is a character for one of my supporters on Patreon. They have lots of interesting characters that enable me to explore lots of quirky colour combinations and creature designs."

**2 DEATH'S HEAD**
"In this watercolour piece I experimented with solidifying multiple techniques to form a new style and composition."

**3 HERCULES**
"This is part of my ongoing project Beautiful Beasts in Blossoms."

**4 BABY PINK**
"I'm not sure if it's the wrinkles or their permanent scowls, but Sphinx cats are extremely fun to draw. I usually paint animals in floating poses, to symbolise freedom and relaxation."

**5 COIL**
"This snake was a milestone piece while exploring new techniques and it was part of my very first Kickstarter campaign."

**6 HAKU**
"Studio Ghibli has always been a big influence for me. Haku, from Spirited Away, was a watercolour piece where I explored calm, cool colours and keeping the style realistic with a minimal amount of line work."

*Pencil* *Copic Marker*

# CHARACTER DESIGN IN COPIC MARKERS

Discover how ASIA LADOWSKA expertly blends pencils and markers to create an original manga character whose innocent appearance belies a nefarious streak...

opic Markers appeared on my radar almost two years ago and I haven't looked back since. It was around the time I started my Instagram page, and my followers could see how the collection of five markers was growing slowly and how much could be achieved with just a few pens. I often limit my usage of markers; a few colours can create refreshing works, while using too many can have the opposite effect.

I'm proud and happy to be able to inspire over 600,000 followers with my daily drawings. Working in the office and studying during the day, I know how hard it is to find the energy and motivation to draw after work or school, but I try to tell everyone to never give up their passions. I started out by spending a few minutes every evening on sketching, but the joy that finished

image brings me is so strong that these days I can spend the whole night drawing without noticing!

For this workshop I challenged myself to come up with a simple character design, mostly to focus on and demonstrate how I use Copic Markers, but don't be deceived! The character and the pose may be simple, but I equipped this girl with accessories and details that add to her personality. At the first glance she may look innocent and harmless, but then you notice a faint smile and one lifted eyebrow complemented by a little patch on her jaw, a sabre cat skull design on her top and claw-like earrings. Then you realise that she's up to no good. Blue colours calm the painting and pink glasses add to a dreamlike atmosphere.

The palette is limited to three main colours: blue, black and pink. If you look closely, they not only work well

together, but they're also composed in harmony wherever I've added them to the paper.

Each colour is featured in no more than three elements: blue (hair, blouse and rose); pink (glasses, sleeves and material at the bottom of the page); black (her top and the two ribbons tying her twin ponytails). This adds rhythm and harmony to the painting.

In addition to the step-by-step breakdown, my video for this workshop also reveals some tips on how I achieve my smooth marker blends. Be sure to check it out!

*Asia is a designer and illustrator from Poland. Every day she draws manga, anime and game-inspired art, and shares it online. She says she encourages others to do what they love because she was always told the opposite. See more at www.instagram.com/ladowska.* ➤➤

## 1 Sketching the day away

It's okay to spend time developing ideas – sketching them out for a while before developing a final drawing. On a good day, it can take five minutes to draw what I want, when hours of labour won't bring the same fresh and satisfying result. Take your time and keep sketches loose.





**MATERIALS**

**PAPER**
■ Canson Moulin du Roy, 300gsm, hot pressed watercolour paper, cheap printer paper for sketching

**PENCILS**
■ Mechanical pencils with black and coloured leads. Black, 0.35mm (HB) and 0.5mm (2B); Pink, Uni NanoDia 0.5mm (HB)

**MARKERS**
■ Copic Sketch and Ciao Markers: E0000, R0000, R000, R00, R11, R30, RV10, RV21, B000, B21, B24, B23, B26, B39, N0, N1, N2, N3, N4, N6 and N8

**MULTILINERS**
■ Copic and Sakura Micron in various colours and thicknesses: 0.03, 0.05, 0.1, 0.3 – sepia, black, pink and blue

## 2 Incorporating different media

Hello Photoshop! At this stage I'd usually choose my favourite messy sketch, scan and open it in Photoshop. Here, I change the image to black and white and make use of the Liquify tool. Flipping it horizontally reveals some mistakes in the drawing.

## 3 Size matters!

My sketches are tiny because it's easier to control the character's proportions. It also stops me from adding a lot of details at the beginning of the process. I scale the design to A4 size and print out to then transfer to a smooth watercolour paper using a light box.

### 4  *First layer of ink*

Before inking, I make some tweaks and add details with pencil, and then put down a thin line mostly with the Sepia Copic Multiliner. Sepia is a safe choice because almost all other colours can cover it in the second stage of inking. Note that ink fades when used with markers, so there's no need to overwork the line art at this stage.

### 5  *Building colour*

Alcohol markers tend to pick up ink that's already on the paper, so it's best to start from the lightest parts of the composition and build up darker colours gradually. The tip will always find a chance to pick up dark ink and create smudges. Bearing this in mind, I start colouring the skin first.



### 6  *Deciding on the colour palette*

Photoshop comes in handy again! Digital software makes it easy for me to try out a range of possibilities and colour combinations, to the degree where I almost decide to use the colours I don't have as markers! When I'm working out a colour palette, I try digital colouring first or draw little five-minute thumbnails on paper and colour them in traditionally. In the end I settle on the blue-pink-black palette.  ➡

B000

B21

B24

B23

B26

B39



### 7 Colouring the character's hair

I love using vibrant gradient colours to paint hair! Copic markers can blend seamlessly and to achieve this I regularly switch between markers, using a lighter colour to create smooth blends. It takes some patience, but it's worth it. I would recommend blending your markers while the ink is still wet.



### 8 The magic of Copic blending

I'm using the same colours for both the hair and the blouse tied around her waist. I use the side with a brush nib for her hair, which enables me to blend softly. For the blouse I use the broad nib of the markers to create a realistic material look. Using markers with different tips makes it possible to create a range of textures.

**9  *Designing accessories***
This is the fun part of the process. Her top shows a cute sabre-toothed cat's skull with cat ears. Adding a flower makes the cat look cute and complements my colour composition, which was missing a blue accent. Her glasses, earrings, patch on her jaw and bows all come together to create a dangerously sweet character!



**10  *Second layer of ink***
Now I apply a second layer of line work, using various colours of multiliners. Varying the line thickness keeps things interesting. The first layer has already faded with the amount of alcohol and ink involved. Time to bring it back!





**11  *Putting the final touches to the character***
I use coloured pencils to make barely noticeable changes to the drawing, such as deepening the shadows and adding a blush to the character's cheeks. Coloured pencils complement markers well and can cover small imperfections and uneven blending. ●

# *Core skills*
# WARMING UP TO WATERCOLOUR

Come on in, the water's fine! Join artist and teacher KELLY MCKERNAN in discovering how to work with, not against, this wonderfully surprising medium

When someone finds out that I work in watercolour, their immediate response is often "But watercolour is so hard!" An unsurprising reaction, perhaps…

I discovered watercolour as a teenager, and instead of being intimidated by its unpredictable nature, I saw endless possibilities. I gradually realised that watercolour offers a unique, collaborative relationship with the artist – one that isn't so straightforward and requires experimentation, openness and most importantly, patience.

By its very nature, watercolour appears to be a difficult beast to tame. After all, its primary vehicle is water! It's key to bear in mind that there'll always be an element of surprise when working with watercolour. Over time and with lots of experimentation and implementation of tried-and-true techniques, I've learned first to control what I can, and as for the rest, work intuitively and allow watercolour to be watercolour. At times it will take the wheel whether you like it or not, but you'll live for those moments when it pleasantly surprises you!
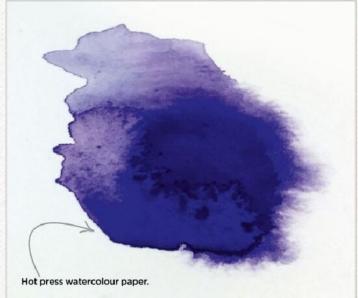
As well as having an open mind and endless patience, working with watercolour requires a particular setup, proper materials, a little technique and a lot of experimentation. In this series, I'm going to share with you how I work with this incredibly versatile and exciting medium and make the best of watercolour's delightfully protean nature.

*Kelly is an independent artist who creates original paintings for galleries, travels for conventions, and mentors students via her Patreon. You can see more of her art at www.kellymckernan.com.*

Cold press watercolour paper.

Hot press watercolour paper.

**1** *What different watercolour papers are available?*
Watercolour paper comes in three textures: hot, cold and rough. Both cold and rough watercolour paper have a bumpy texture, and will give you more vibrant colours. However, I enjoy working with hot press because the smooth texture enables me to achieve sharper details. Watercolour paper also comes in various weights. I recommend starting with 140lb. The heavier it is, the less likely it is to buckle under a lot of water. Aim to use top-brand papers such as Arches or Strathmore, because the quality of your paper is very important.

#7 Size 1 liner sable brush.

Size 0 Kolinsky sable brush.

Size 1 Kolinsky sable brush.

## 2 *Choosing your brushes*

Watercolour brushes can vary widely and it can be tough making a decision on which ones to buy. There are both synthetic and natural hair brushes available for watercolour use, and each have their own strengths. I prefer to work with Kolinsky red sable brushes, because the natural fibres hold liquid better than synthetics can, although they are more expensive. Brushes come in many shapes as well, though I most commonly use Rounds ranging from size 0 up to 6. ➤➤

Size 2 Kolinsky sable brush.

Size 3 Kolinsky sable brush.

Size 6 Kolinsky sable brush.

Size 1 squirrel hair mop brush.

A nice perk to working with watercolour is that it can always be re-wetted when dried, so an old palette can be brought back to life in a snap.

### 3 Select a watercolour palette that suits your way of working

Responsible watercolour artists typically use a large palette divided into wells for their colours. My particular method of working with limited colour palettes has landed me on a small, cheap eight-well palette with two mixing areas. I keep several around, including larger circular palettes in rotation, so that I can dedicate one per painting. This is useful when I'm working on more than one piece at a time.



### 4 Pick your paints

Watercolour paints most commonly come in tubes or pans. I prefer to use watercolour tubes because I can achieve better intensity right off the bat. I work with several brands, but my favourites are Grumbacher and Winsor & Newton for basic colours, and Daniel Smith for speciality colours and those that granulate nicely. My techniques for creating texture take advantage of the pigment separation that comes with these speciality colours. Student-quality watercolours won't get you very far, so I'd recommend spending a little extra on the good stuff, since you'll have it for some time anyway. Some of my current rotation of watercolours are over five years old!

Here are some of my most frequently used watercolours, along with speciality Finetec gold and silver pans.

My trusty ceramic water mug.

3M blue painter's tape, used for masking as well as taping loose paper.

Coarse ice cream salt, best for large areas of texture.

Fine kosher salt, for small areas of texture.

GRUMBACHER
*Miskit*™
LIQUID FRISKET
LIQUIDE FRISQUETTE
FRISKET LÍQUIDO

#10 Grumbacher Miskit Frisket masking fluid.

Kneaded eraser.

Grafix Original Incredible Nib that I use for applying masking fluid.

#9 Standard mechanical pencil that I prefer to use for sketching.

#7 Molotow masking fluid pen.

#8 Tombow Mono Eraser pen.

## 4 *Additional tools*

My favourite part of working with watercolour involves the tools that push the medium even further. I most commonly use kosher salt and ice cream salt for texture effects (the latter creates larger texture). I'll also occasionally mask to preserve an area of paper with the aid of masking fluid or tape. These technique will be covered in future instalments of this series. Stay tuned!

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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
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